

# punk planet

ISSUE #47 | FEBRUARY 2002 | \$3.95

## magazine

amy ray | tom robinson | burn the olympics | mint chords | M.I.G. | the haggard | unwound



# why?





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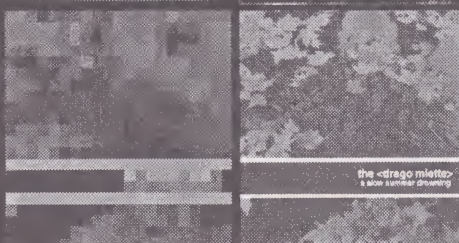
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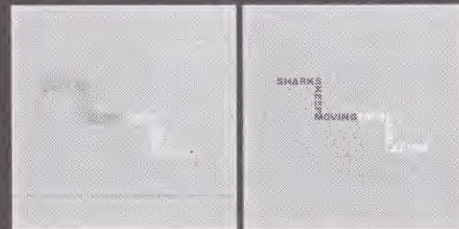
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DON'T CALL THEM THE BMX PISTOLS P.46

# PP47



## Planeteers

Daniel Sinker  
is extremely tired

Joel Schalit  
Chris Ziegler  
work too hard

Eric Action  
are attentive listeners

Leah Ryan  
tells stories out of school

Shawn Kruggel  
reads good

Jessica Hopper  
puts our name in a .sig

Dan Sinker  
Marianna Levant  
Frol Boundin  
Dustin Mertz  
Michael Coleman  
keep it real

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Chris Eng  
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Any ads received after deadline may run in the following issue.  
Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?  
the risks



# intro47

**T**he message went something like this: "I have read *Punk Planet* since its inception. I have always vehemently disagreed with you about your snivelling attitude towards the Palestinians and the Muslim/Arab world. In particular, I think it is irresponsible, I think it has always been treasonous, I think it is disgusting, and I hope and pray that . . ." Then he hung up.

That was what was waiting for me when I arrived at the PP office on the morning of September 12th. It was off-putting to say the least, but it wasn't totally unexpected. I never started this magazine to win a popularity contest, and our coverage of the murder of Iraqi citizens and the plight of Palestinian refugees definitely hasn't won us a whole lot of friends. But still, who, in the middle of the night of September 11th, was thinking about what *magazines* they've read that they could phone up and call "treasonous"? Me, I was so numbed by the news of the day that I was having a hard time even forming words, let alone really nasty ones like "snivelling" or "disgusting."

Well, it's been a few months and I've finally been able to form a few words. For those of you keeping score, you'll notice

that this issue came out a month late. Well, it took a little while longer for me to start forming those words than I would have expected. I spent a lot of time over the last few months trying to figure out how *Punk Planet*, as a bi-monthly magazine could bring anything new or useful to a news story that was changing by the day.

A friend finally helped me figure what to do when he said, "Alternative voices are so hard to find right now, that *anything* is helpful." That advice prompted all of us here at Punk Planet cast a very wide net for voices.

The result, our cover story "War Songs in Ten Verses", is a diverse collection of articles, interviews, and essays dealing with many different aspects of the war and the times that surround it. They're a varied bunch, to be sure, but I think overall it paints a complex, multi-layered picture of what's happening and why. I hope you enjoy it, even if you disagree with some of the takes in it.

Oh, and to the guy that left that message: fuck you. I hope you enjoy the latest installment in our "treasonous" magazine.

See ya'll in the spring,



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### As The Sun Sets : *Each individual Voice...* : CD

Technical, grind influenced thrashing metal/hc. With a sound that is the bastard child of Acme, Rorschach and Converge, this is absolutely one of the best bands making this kind of racket in our grey world.



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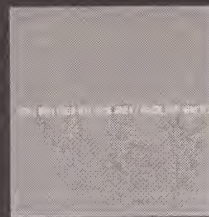
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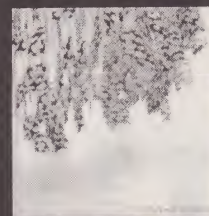
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S/T

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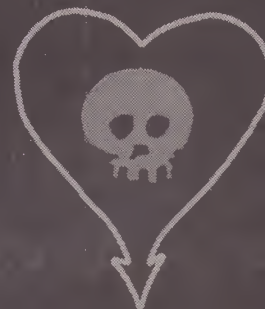
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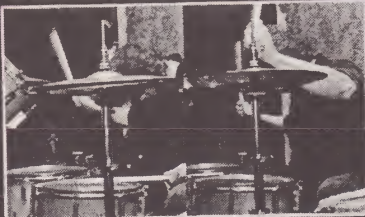
—MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL #217

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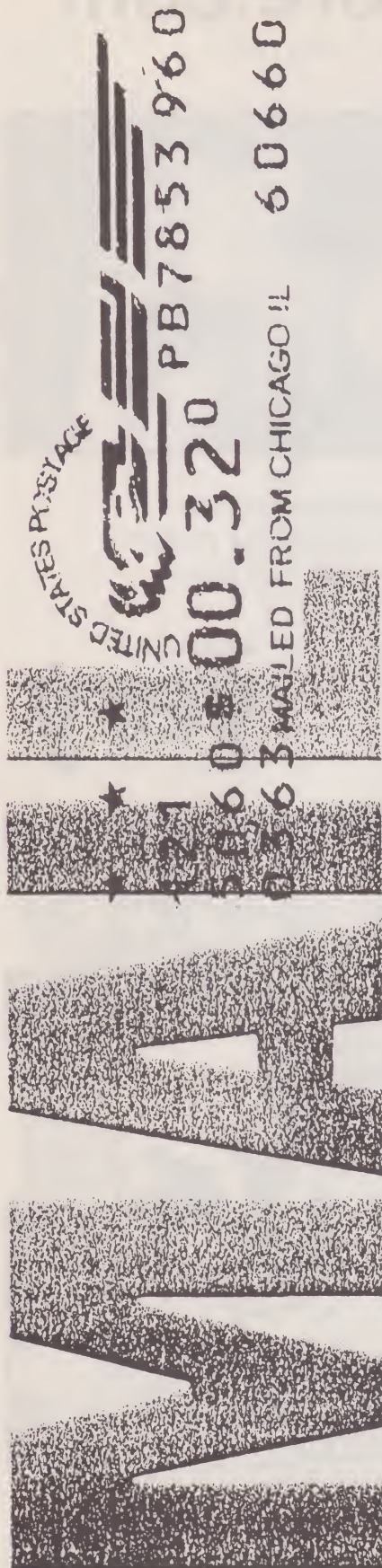
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## Life & Debt gets praise

Hello Punk Planet—

We were all pleasantly surprised by the much-needed Stephanie Black interview in *PP* issue #45. Purely speaking on a national level, Stephanie Black's documentary of individual Jamaicans in relation to that of the world's economy deserved a dozen times more publicity than it actually received. That is why I was (on a personal level) so glad to see that *PP* had the actual insight to interview the documentarian about her rather poignant & beautiful documentary—*Life & Debt*.

Small prediction: this film has become so momentous that in the years to come as Jamaica's economy falls further down the cracks & becomes a full-blown charity case (not to say it's not already hemorrhaging as we speak), people will look back on *Life & Debt* as the pivotal documentary film that epitomized the key problem with the IMF Bureaucracy, much like the film *the Insider* shined a national spotlight on the Tobacco Industry.

In short, fuck the attitude of the IMF's Deputy Director Stanley Fischer. Thank the goddess for documentary filmmaker Stephanie Black.

Katie Moore  
CSSSA, California

## More on what's punk

Re: Ben Tokyo's letter in ish 45.

While I share some of Ben's objections to the elitism that has become so prevalent in punk, I have to take issue with some of his assertions. In case Ben hasn't been paying attention, the creation of punk rock music in the 70's and its continuation today has led to the creation of a culture that appreciates it. This culture has expressed an appreciation for alternative politics, as evident from bands in the beginning such as the Sex Pistols, up to the Dead Kennedys and Bad Religion, and even to modern-day groups like Anti-Flag. The point is, every culture has its members who may not adhere completely to its shared beliefs, and even in a group we must account for differences of the individual,

but by and large, punk has defined itself as a culture that appreciates politics outside the mainstream. So no, you don't have to adhere to these beliefs to be "punk" but in a broad outlook on the culture, many punks do. So enjoy the music if you like it, accept the parts of the culture that appeal to you, but at the same time, don't try to deny the existence of a very real group that has a shared experience. There are those of us punks out here who believe in these causes.

JZ

## PP: good. Reviews: not so good

Hello PP,

I've just finished devouring your design issue [PP46]—amazing selection of artists (though I would have loved to have seen something on the vastly underappreciated Neil Burke of Vermiform fame) and the usual high-quality, insightful cultural critique I now expect from your pages. Great stuff—your shit shines like a beacon amongst a sea of truly fucking awful magazines . . .

That said, I gotta get a gripe off my chest—your music review section is really uninspiring and lets down the great articles/interviews in the rest of each issue. Your reviewers (on the whole) completely forego any kind of contextual placement of the records, instead offering the kind of lame "this-band-sounds-like-X-and-Y" music criticism that makes maximum rocknroll such a fucking boring read. Which means your writers almost uniformly fail to engage issues of the larger cultural/social/musical importance surrounding the records themselves—the same issues your articles and interviews manage to nail every time (like the Gee Vaucher interview—looking into the form AND function of her work . . . exactly right!!!) It just seems to me your review section is anachronistic among an otherwise spot-on magazine.

Anyway, hope you're all well. Keep the good work going,

Best,  
Nick Phillips

---

*Got something on your mind? Please write us!*

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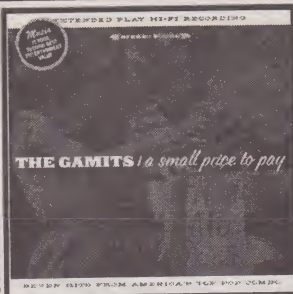


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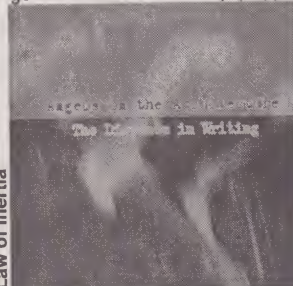
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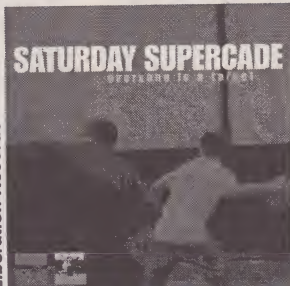


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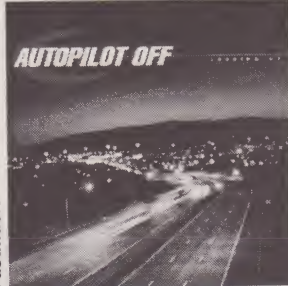
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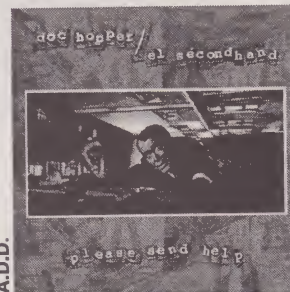
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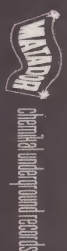


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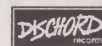
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What the Fuck!



# columns

# PP47

jessica hopper  
larry livermore  
joel schalit  
kim bae  
bob conrad  
darren cahr  
sam mcpheters



rip it up.

jessica  
hopper

9/28—11:30 am I am driving north on Ashland. It feels like the last day of summer that we might get this year, so I have the windows down and classic rock

radio on. They are doing an Eagles "rock block". It starts with "Desperado", which I don't hate enough to turn off, even though I should. I am stopped about eight cars back from the stoplight. I recognize an old man who is often posted up a few blocks, pan-handling at the next major intersection—he is hobbling his way down the white line, between the cars, holding a sign. All I can make out is that he has a mini American flag pinned to his breast pocket and that one pant leg is rolled up to the knee. As he gets closer I see something is very wrong with his leg. Only one car has given him money so far. His sign says "I need money for treatment of burn on my leg". The burn covers most of his lower leg—fresh, ripe, sunburn pink tissue—exposed and swollen. Pus glistening, mingling with blood and grime, running down and staining his sock and shoe brown. My instinct is to look away, but I don't. I put all the money I have, which is a dollar and a dime, into the man's hand. I start crying. I feel like I won't be able to stop.

9/27 Racine & Belmont It's 9 p.m. I am walking down the street behind a couple in their late '20s; they have just left a restaurant. They are holding hands and walking close. The man is wearing a blue shirt and dark pants and leather man-sandals. I wonder if he realizes he looks like he's out on the town in his Kinko's uniform. The lady has a blonde ponytail. A block later, I am still behind them, when she tosses her left arm out, swiftly, to the right—across the chest of the man, and with exuberant surprise announces "Look!", arm stiff, finger pointing in the direction of large American flag draped off a porch. She says something that the man doesn't understand. She clarifies "The flag." A few steps later she throws her same pointer arm out to her left, "Look!" she

says again, this time aiming her finger at a personalized license plate that reads AWESOM. I wonder if she acts like this, like she's at the zoo, all of the time. I wonder what they talk about after they fuck.

9/22 All the Wendys' have changed all their signs from "God Bless America" to "The Bacon Mushroom melt—You gotta have it" today. I guess they are taking Bush's suggestion to "get back to normal" to heart.

9/17 There is a new rule in our house now; the rule being that I can't watch TV with my roommates. I keep yelling things like "What a fucking cock! Who lets these people on TV?!" at "news" anchors and "experts", which is usually accompanied by loud complaints in a high disgusted tone that "our""president" looks like a Monchi-chi doll, or a shaved, dead, prairie dog, or pissed off Leprechaun. Apparently, my unhinged outbursts are disrupting their TV absorption.

9/12 "Give me one reason—one *good* reason why you can't be Alan Thicke" I say.

"No. I told you—no" JR is insisting. He's not hearing me out. I am a litany of *quality suggestions*—well, at least in my mind I am.

"All you need is a cable knit sweater and some pleated slacks—we can fluff yr hair up a bit..., c'mon..."

Halloween is coming.

For the last half hour of our dinner, Joan and JR and I have been mulling over costume ideas for JR. Actually, its more me raving, Joan laughing and snorting and JR going "*No, I told you—no women, no animals and no inanimate objects!*." I have been lobbying hard for Peter Jennings. I promised that if he said yes, I would build him an ABC news desk to wear that would attach to his suit with Velcro and hidden straps. Since yesterday, I am in love with Peter Jennings. He's the only man on TV with any real integrity or tangible essence of ethics—A TRUE JOURNALIST. He has a subdued detachment, but is neither aloof nor cynical. I chalk this up to him being Canadian. Off screen, I imagine him secretly socialist and also infinitely graceful, learned and worldly without ever being overbearing—never dominating—the sort of person that I



would like to be when I go to adult dinner parties. JR agrees on Jennings' masterful mystique; though he doesn't agree to be Peter Jennings.

My suggestions become more conceptual the more highly caffeinated iced tea I swill. "OKAY okay, Listen—*Chewbacca Dot Com*. I will sew a furry Chewbacca head and hands, and then you'll wear a suit and tie, and a bullet belt, like, over yr shoulders..." I trail off—JR is not picking up what I am putting down. I try and up the ante by romancing the idea of, in tandem, conceptualizing my costume, that way we can all bear the brunt of being Halloween'd retards together! My costume is and has been—since early summer—pre-teen Romanian gymnast, heroine of my youth, Nadia Comeniche. Pig tails, red leotard, a medal, talcum powder on my hands and bandages on my wrists. (I always wanted to be her and now I finally have the chance)) "I could be "Nadia Comeniche with a dick!" I suggest. JR slugs back another long swig of his bloody mary and shakes his head, demused. I start in again. Swiss Cheese. Gary Condit. A Bee. A dinosaur with a big tail. Steve Perry from Journey. A station wagon. Captain Kurtz. Lester Bangs. Richard Simmons. A beaver. Donald Fagen. All the members of Shellac rolled into one. Al Burian. Santa Claus.

"Pleeeeeeze. Think about it. My ideas are all so good, I am giving you so many options to choose from here." I plead my case like a whiny teenage strike negotiator.

He stirs his drink and sits, waiting, patiently denying me, smiling while I laugh at myself and talk excitedly.

We are all giddy, with this talking of the future, amidst this heavy pall. Trying to imagine a month and a half away—it feels like a reckless maybe hanging above our heads.

After dinner, we drive around the empty city aimlessly, like we're running errands but we've forgotten what they were. We're listening to *Timeless Melodies*, a collection of engaging golden hits of the '60s and '70s done by a schmaltz orchestra in dramatic but ephemeral, breezy arrangements. When my grandpa died my grandma told me to take anything I wanted of his. So I took some monkey cufflinks and the small collection of tapes (*Timeless Melodies*, *All Time Favorites* et al) that came free with his sub-

scription renewal to Readers Digest.

We turn left on to Lake Shore Drive, and encounter one of the most beautiful views of Downtown Chicago. One of the views that makes me think I could never leave here. Perfectly attuned with our moment, the tape starts a new lite hymn—The Ray Conniff Singers secreting a buttery version of the BeeGees "How Deep Is Your Love?". I imagine that if anyone ever made a Christian soft-porn, that this would be its theme—with the bewitching dichotomy of lucid double entendres and high-atop-a-mountain-in-a-blinding-ray-of-sunshine style crescendos creating a true study in perversity. Meanwhile, everyone in the car is staring at the Hancock building thinking the same thing.

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*In rotation: Miles Davis - Kind of Blue, Botch - live, Sade - Lovers Rock, Meat Puppets - II, Ted Leo, "Disco Not Disco" comp, Ornette Coleman - Shape of Jazz to Come, Fugazi - Instrument, Bows. The new issue of Hit it or Quit it is out now, which you can also read for free on Insound. Write: P.O. Box 14624 Chicago IL 60614 / mcfrenchvanilla@yahoo.com. I will write you back.*



*Gentlemen may cry,  
peace, peace—but there  
is no peace.*

—Patrick Henry

At the beginning  
of the 1980s, I  
moved to the

country. Lest you get the wrong impression, it was not "the country" of green fields, red barns and contentedly grazing cows, where happy farmers whistled jaunty tunes as they tended the crops destined for the friendly folk in neighboring Toytown.

It would be more accurate to say I moved to the wilderness, but that description would be skewed as well. It was not the poetic, reflective wilderness of Thoreau, nor the Eden-like wilderness



of the popular imagination.

People had lived there once, but they had been driven off a hundred years earlier. Few marks remained of their passing—some rock carvings, an occasional arrowhead—and since then the land had lain fallow, visited only by those who came to plunder its resources, mainly trees and gravel.

Gradually the land became populated again, mostly by refugees from urban life, the 20th century descendants of the pioneers, people upon whom civilization had come to lie a bit too heavily, who were determined, like Huckleberry Finn, to "light out for the territories."

I became one of them. I had grown sick of human society, at least insofar as it was practiced in San Francisco. The last straw came when my girlfriend and I were chased from one side of the city to the other by a gang of young men wielding 2x4s who, for reasons I still don't understand, seemed determined to kill us.

When we finally escaped, my fear gave way to anger and frustration, and I said, "That does it. To hell with this city. I'll go off to the forest and start my own."

I didn't really intend to start a new city. What I really meant was to start a new way of living, almost, in a sense, a new civilization. I was conveniently ignoring the fact that civilization involved living together with large numbers of people while the purpose of my flight to the country was to ensure that never again would I have to live with anyone not of my choosing.

I was really craving, in addition to solitude and safety, the greater purity of nature. Of course I had a very different conception of nature then. It consisted of fresh air and beautiful scenery and cuddly animals scurrying amid the trees and flowers.

As with most city kids of my generation, fairy tales and Disney films had shaped my view, and further distorted by hippie romanticism, which held that all of mankind's troubles were the result of having strayed from the "natural" order of things.

There was little new in this dualistic view; all of civilization, and western civilization in particular, has at its heart the notion that humans are somehow apart or different from nature. The corollary is a deep, abiding sense that we are "unnatural," that there is something fundamentally flawed and wrong with us.

The whole thrust of Judeo-Christian culture has been to deal with this perceived flaw by removing ourselves still further from nature, to cast our lot instead with divinity. The Book of Genesis, linchpin of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, makes this case from the outset: we humans are the children of God, and as such we are to "subdue" the earth and have "dominion" over all other creatures on it. Historically, we have judged as most civilized those who appear to have removed themselves most decisively from "nature."

Even atheists, neo-pagans, and deep ecologists paid tribute to this orthodoxy through their efforts to reject it. By holding that man could find redemption not through God, but in nature, they were unconsciously reinforcing the concept that man was something apart from nature.

Having had a grounding in both traditions, I felt sure that coming to the country would lead me to salvation of some sort. Consciously, I sought something more "real" than the symbolic and mediated existence of the city. At a deeper level, I believed that by observing and emulating the workings of nature, I could become a better person.

Nature wasted little time giving me a schooling. First came a late-season blizzard that left me snowbound for a month. Life narrowed to the most elemental of struggles: finding enough wood to keep from freezing to death, husbanding the food supply to stave off starvation.

Then came the heat and drought of summer. The creek dried up, and I labored under a blazing sun with shovel and pick to coax a bit more water from the last of the springs. At night I fell into bed too exhausted even to undress or to wash away the day's accumulated grime. For better or worse, I had found the "real" existence I had been craving.

Sometime that summer I killed my first animal. It was a rattlesnake, or so I thought. After blasting it to smithereens, I discovered to my horror that it was a harmless—indeed beneficial, for it ate garden-destroying gophers—lookalike. I cried, bitterly.

I would have felt bad even if it had been a rattlesnake, though some of my compunctions vanished later when a rattlesnake nearly killed one of my dogs. But for the most part the snakes moved away from the immediate area of the house, and if they came too close, the cats would kill and eat them.

The problem of skunks wasn't so easily solved. One took up residence under the house. She had discovered that I left trays of food there for the cats and dogs, and when the cats and dogs protested at her eating their food, she replied in the way only a skunk can.

Soon I was being awakened every night by a cacophony of hisses and growls, followed by a cloud of skunk scent that wafted up through the floorboards and filled the house, making it difficult to breathe and impossible to sleep. The skunk, with a comfortable place to sleep and a never-ending supply of free food, set up housekeeping and started a family. Soon six little skunks had joined the party, and it became obvious that either they had to go or I did.

Reasoning does not work with skunks. Nor do threats or promises. A few times I tried lobbing rocks at them, but they soon realized my rock-throwing ability was negligible, and no match for their stink-throwing ability. It was time to mount an armed response.

I shot mama skunk and several of her offspring. The surviving skunks fled and didn't return. My dogs, who'd been having their food stolen, retaliated in kind by devouring the skunks and turning their hides into playthings that provided weeks of entertainment. My own response wasn't so light-hearted.

In fact I was up all night, my mood see-sawing between exuberance and despair. I felt powerful, like a warrior, the master of my own destiny, and I felt ashamed, like a murderer, a pawn of



my basest emotions. I was no longer an observer of nature, but a part of it, and I wasn't sure I liked the feeling.

I killed more animals over the years—some raccoons who'd occupied the vacancy left by the skunks, a rabid skunk that was staggering around the yard, a whole nest of rattlesnakes—and it became easier, though never pleasant. I found myself following the custom of some American Indians, of apologizing to the doomed creature in advance. I did the same on occasions when I had to cut down a living tree.

Then came the bear. The first few times I saw him, I mistook him for a large black dog. He was skittish, and ran off into the woods as soon as I opened my door. But he grew in both size and boldness, and soon all my shouts, all my banging of pots and spoons, ceased to faze him. He ripped the side wall from my dogs' house, did the same to the door of the utility shed, and left huge gouges in my own front door as he tried to claw his way in. Finally he smashed his way through a kitchen window, demolished my kitchen, and lumbered through the rest of the house, leaving a trail of destruction before exiting through another window.

Fortunately this all happened when I was away from home. But it was clearly an untenable situation. It was time to pick up the gun.

My friends in the city, they were horrified. "It was the bear's home before you moved in," they protested. "How could you consider killing him just for acting according to his nature?"

I replied that it was not the bear's home before I moved in, that I had been there 10 years and he had only just arrived. What's more, I had never once sought out his den or tried to destroy it, never attempted to steal his food, never interfered with his ability to wander and hunt anywhere but a tiny corner out of thousands of acres of land. If he was acting according to his nature, I was acting according to mine: lacking the claws and teeth to defend my home and food the way he would, I had to use the tools I had.

Other naive souls, perhaps influenced by too many Yogi Bear cartoons, asked why I didn't call the police or the forest rangers to deal with the problem. They seemed incapable of understanding that there were no police or forest rangers where I lived, and even if there were, I would merely be introducing a middleman. What was the difference, I asked, between shooting a bear myself and summoning an armed agent of the state to do it for me?

A long war of nerves ensued. Bears are smart creatures; and this one, in particular, seemed able to tell whether I was armed or not. When I wasn't carrying a weapon, he would snarl and growl at me; when I had the shotgun in my hands, he would go bounding in the woods the minute he laid eyes on me.

Finally I laid a trap for him, leaving a tray of food in plain view on a brightly moonlit night. When he approached, I fired a one-ounce lead slug into his hindquarters. It would have killed him if I had hit his head or heart, but in the edginess of the

moment, the gun jerked just enough that I missed those targets. It wasn't enough to stop him from running away, and didn't permanently cripple him, because in the following months I would regularly find his tracks in the woods. But my aim had been achieved: he never returned, never bothered my home or my property again.

This marked the completion of a cycle that had begun with my arrival in the country; a cycle that saw me transformed from an innocent adrift in the woods to a slightly sadder but considerably wiser realist. My education had begun the first time I saw a wildcat bound out of the forest, seize a rabbit by the throat, and methodically rip it to shreds. It had continued through the blizzards, droughts, floods, and pestilences that nature repeatedly threw at me, and—though it's dangerous to say that anyone's education is ever truly concluded—reached a climax of sorts when I found myself able to dispassionately employ the level of violence necessary to maintain my place in the world. I was no longer an observer of nature, but a part of it.

Any moral I might draw from those experiences risks being tendentious and hamhanded in the light of recent events, but I still feel impelled to try. Those of us who came of age in America during or since Vietnam, the first postmodern war, too often see the geopolitical world through the same Disney-esque lens that city dwellers view nature. Having enjoyed a greater liberty and paid a lesser price for it than virtually any people in the history of the world, we have been free to theorize and postulate, to draw up grand schemes for the re-ordering of reality without ever having those schemes tested in the crucible of combat.

Many of us have become pacifists, in principle if not always in practice, and over time forgotten that pacifism for most people is a luxury, one which most frequently flourishes in societies made safe and comfortable by immense military superiority. It is true that certain marginalized cultures, outgunned if not outnumbered, have used pacifism as a revolutionary technique. One thinks of the American civil rights movement or Gandhi's struggle for Indian independence. But in both cases, the power of pacifism was contingent on its appeal to the better nature of the forces it opposed.

What value, though, has pacifism, when one's opponent lacks a "better" nature, when the nature of the opponent is simply to destroy any and all opposition? Admirers of Gandhi's legacy tend to skip over the uncomfortable fact that the success of his nonviolent crusade opened the door to decades of vicious internecine, religious warfare that, half a century later, has still not been resolved, and has produced two rival countries, cultures and religions in a perilous nuclear face-off.

The wise man avoids conflict whenever possible. Only the fool avoids it at any cost. To respond to a threat of violence by refusing to engage with it can be as bad as, or even worse than, the violence itself. During World War II George Orwell made the well-reasoned argument that British pacifists were, by refusing to take up arms against Nazi Germany, acting on behalf of Nazi



Germany. The pacifists countered that they were merely being true to their principles, which seems a fair thing to say, but it's equally fair to say that their principles included a willingness to accept Nazi subjugation of their homeland and the genocide that would entail.

In that light, were the pacifists being moral or delusional? Orwell held that they were immoral, and all the more so because their right to make a principled stand on behalf of nonviolence existed only so long as soldiers violently resisted the Nazis who would extinguish that right.

People are wary of too-facile analogies between Nazism and modern-day Islamist terrorism, between the attack on Pearl Harbor and those on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. They are right to be wary, because in many ways the situations differ greatly. But in one respect, they are depressingly similar: both represent irrational, implacable forces which lack a "better nature" to which we can appeal. In both cases, passive resistance makes no more sense than a peace march organized by rabbits on behalf of the principle that wildcats should stop the cruel practice of eating them.

It is educational, useful as well, to understand the roots of such fanatical movements, to learn how the mistakes and misdeeds of our own society contributed to their growth. But that is a far cry from accepting responsibility for actions and ideologies for which there is no excuse, an even further cry from failing to defend ourselves against attacks which ultimately have no purpose other than destroying us and our way of life.

I recognize that this will be a minority view among readers of this magazine. I'm also conscious, as someone who is now past the age when men are called upon to fight for their country that it's unseemly to call upon other, younger men to fight the battles that I can be excused from. What's more, I don't claim to know what specifically needs to be done, who if anyone we should attack, how best to ensure that nothing like the events of September 11th can ever happen again.

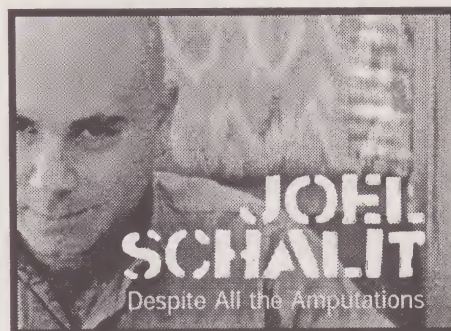
I do feel reasonably certain, though, that reasoned words and principled stands would not by themselves attain that goal. Nor would re-thinking the entire foreign policy of the United States, however necessary the rethinking might be.

Sadly, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that when people are trying to kill you, it is sometimes necessary to kill them first. To conclude otherwise means that you think the cause of those who would kill you is a better, nobler one than that of your own survival.

Orwell again: "In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible." Words like "terrorism," "liberation struggles," "pacification," "aggression," "imperialism," and "freedom fighters" are bandied about with glib facility; all obscure the brutal truth, that political power derives not only from the consent of the governed, but from the willingness to kill those who challenge it.

Similarly, it is easy to say that one stands for "peace" or

"freedom" or "justice," but what do you say when two sides, both claiming to stand for those noble principles, are killing each other? Sometimes, as difficult as it may be, it is necessary to choose sides, and I fear that this may be one of those times. And to that I can only add: choose wisely, because the choice may not come again.



I'd forgotten to turn my Power Book off before going to bed. Stumbling into the living room, I saw that I had a number of emails

that had accumulated over the course of the night. Not quite awake yet, I made myself an espresso and sat down to see what I had received before walking out the front door to pick up the newspaper. It was still fairly early. Feeling nervous, I wanted to make sure that there was nothing important to attend to before I retreated to the reassuring comfort of my *New York Times*, and my first bites of cereal.

The first and only letter I ended up reading was from a really sweet journalist friend in Tel Aviv. "Oh dear," it read. "I hope your friends and family are okay." All of the sudden I could feel my heart beating. Anxiety began to spread inside my chest. *Shit*, I thought, *something must have happened in the town where my parents live*. Fearful that after eighty years, my father had finally been killed in a terrorist action, I immediately opened my browser and went straight to *Ha'aretz* web site to see what had happened back home.

I had good reason to be nervous. In recent weeks, Palestinian guerrilla activity had started to target the northern part of the country. Several days before, the very first Israeli Arab suicide bomber—a middle-aged man and former mayoral candidate from the village of Abu Snan—had detonated himself at the train station in Nahariya during commuter hours. Several weeks before, a suicide bomber had blown himself up at a café not so ironically named *Wall Street* on the outskirts of Haifa. The violence, I feared, was getting closer.

Much to my surprise, instead of seeing a picture of Israeli soldiers cleaning up the debris from a terrorist attack, the site featured a picture of the World Trade Center in New York in flames. Underneath the photograph was a summary of what had happened, linking to a larger account of the tragedy. I took a deep breath, and for a moment found myself breathing the most awkward sighs of relief, only to find myself catching up with the tragic irony of what had just transpired. *They finally got the real Wall Street*, I thought rather bitterly, as I imagined how horrific the casualties would be. Not just an appropriately named café in Haifa, but the interna-



tional financial hub itself, in America, not Israel.

As Courtney and I spent our morning sitting in front of the television set watching footage of these symbols of American economic hegemony collapse before us, television newscasters consistently made reference to the Israeli experience of terrorism, and how America had finally come to share in this. Inevitably, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was interviewed as to his opinion on what had happened. All I could seem to hear him saying was "Now you know what it is we have to face," even though he never put it quite that directly. Disgusted by what I imagined to be the outcome of this event—a ferocious war between the United States and Islamic fundamentalists—I turned off the television set, muttering to Courtney, "No wonder I first heard the news from Israel. America has finally become a part of the Middle East."

...

Two months later, I found myself at a dinner party at my old friend Ross' apartment, 10 blocks away from where I live. The purpose of the occasion was to celebrate the arrival of his mother Anne, who was visiting town from New Zealand, where she currently works as a radiologist at a large public hospital. I know Ross' mother well. Throughout high school and college, Ross and I would stay with Anne and her husband Bill at their picturesque log cabin country home in the Cascade Mountains, 60 miles east of Portland, where she would serve us tea all day and cook us wonderful dinners. A former boarding school student herself, Anne grew up in England during the 1940s, when she was sent away to study in the country in order to avoid the daily bombing raids that British cities were subject to by German planes, and towards the end of the war, long-range missiles.

As I stood next to Anne, listening to her describe what life in New Zealand is like, I couldn't help but feel as though she had gotten out of town again at exactly the right time. A matter of weeks before the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, Anne moved to Auckland from her home in Longview, Washington in order to start anew after the death of her husband. Nowhere could seem further removed from all of this killing and anxiety than there, I thought, as I listened to Anne explain how cosmopolitan and relaxed New Zealand is. Even though its geographically far closer to the action than San Francisco, a similar self-protective narrative had kicked in at just the right time, and Anne had managed to spare herself the unbelievable misery of living in post-September 11<sup>th</sup> America.

*Why couldn't I have thought of doing something like that, I asked myself as I wandered into the kitchen, looking for a drink. Why hadn't I taken more of the initiative and found myself another home, far away from America? The truth is that I had. For several months, on the insistence of my rapidly aging parents, I'd reluctantly found myself in the process of trying to obtain a lecturer's position in philosophy at an Israeli university so that I could look after them. As my machinations to obtain a position began to yield results, I could not help but feel that I was making the most stupid of mistakes in giving up life in San Francisco, and moving into a middle of a country at war.*

"Why on earth are you worried about it?" asked my friend Drew as we drank beer while waiting to see Lightning Bolt play at a bar here in town. "It's a teaching job! Besides, you couldn't go to a better place given the kind of work that you do. Think of the source material you'll be able to gather!"

Well, if ideologically motivated comparisons between America and Israel still hold, at the very least, everyday life in America has become an equally rich resource for many of the same reasons my friends and I think Israeli life might be. While it is important for progressives to understand the reactionary reasons behind American invocations of the Israeli experience of terrorism, there are certain core truths about what it is that Israelis experience that Americans can learn from in order to more responsibly navigate the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world. The most important lesson is that Israel has managed to put up with being at war for over 50 years because it has managed to provide its citizenry with a relatively stable, middle class way of life that is identical to what prevails in Europe and the United States.

Israeli Jews live with an unparalleled degree of comfort and opportunities compared to the rest of the Middle East, replete with a highly cosmopolitan mass media, global consumer goods, high technology, cars, cheap education and the like. Yet, always hovering in the background are suicide bombings, army service and terrorist attacks. You never know when it might be your turn. Nevertheless, the quality of life in Israel is such that unless you live in a settlement or Jerusalem, one can live a life that is not consistently touched by war. And yet the threat of being blown up at the shopping mall or gunned down while waiting for the bus is always present, and everyone is somehow affected by it. This is something that Israelis have learned to live with because they are for the most part well taken care of by their state and mass culture, and their ability to consume the same kinds of consumer goods and media that Americans and Europeans do.

It cannot be underestimated how much this has contributed to Israeli society resigning itself to a fate that is circumscribed by a permanent state of war, where suicide bombings and MTV Europe are two sides of the same daily coin. There is no other country that manages to live with these kinds of alleged contradictions so well, or at such a psychological price. Having to reconcile such extremes has had a horrific effect on the Israeli psyche, allowing it to tolerate all kinds of injustices and resign itself to a distinct lack of political democracy that the country's leadership prides itself in. Thus, it becomes possible to govern three million Palestinians indefinitely without giving them voting powers or civil and economic rights, because, to use the language of the Israeli right, Palestinians are inherently anti-Semitic lice whom if not oppressed, would kill us. In between dodging suicide bombings at train stations, and machine gun bullets while swinging with your friends on the playground, eventually you develop a sense that none of this is ever your responsibility.

Even though many Americans are sensitive to these kinds of stereotypical contradictions, they are not familiar with the long-



term psychological consequences of what it means to live in such an ideologically complicated environment where first world affluence and anti-colonial violence are the norm. And yet, now for the first time Americans are threatened with that very same violence here in the United States, and have a terrible time accounting for its relationship to this bloodshed in much the same ways that Israelis do. This is why the Israeli example is something that we ought to consider because no matter how much both Americans and Israelis may desire peace; both of their countries have to greater and lesser extents learned to reconcile economic productivity and affluence with being in a permanent state of war. The difference for Americans is that a crucial experiential line is crossed when wars with other societies and cultures are finally brought home. The danger that accrues is how we learn to live with it.

Given how long Americans are being told we will have to fight this war, it is important that we do our utmost to avoid falling into a frame of mind that both disguises and permits the toleration of military violence. This is not meant to downplay the need to do less complicated kinds of criticisms of the status quo such as having an educated contempt for patriotism and naïve expressions of support for our troops fighting abroad. There will always be a need for that, but it has to be combined with a more subtle appreciation of the long-term psychological impact of experiencing death within a society like our own. The point is to develop a sense that none of this is as unprecedented as we are told it is. For example, five weeks after the attack on the World Trade Center, my journalist friend in Tel Aviv wrote to me asking how I was faring with everything. Jokingly I mentioned that I was thinking of moving to Iceland. In return she replied:

"Welcome to Israel. It seems like you are experiencing the basic Israeli adventure. Militarism mixed with shallow patriotism and not enough criticism. [My husband] just came back from a week visit to NY and Philly, and he was shocked by the flags and the monolithic state of mind. He felt like even young people who usually do not tend to follow the mainstream that easily, let themselves be carried away by that hate river. You are thinking about Iceland, [my husband's] uncle is checking real estate in Australia."



Chicago but finally I arrived. I was really looking forward to seeing Henrik, Thomas, and Jörn, whom I considered to be my closest

overseas friends. My trip was "planned" very hastily and I had only managed to send them emails from Victoria Station in London that morning so I wasn't sure if they even knew I was coming that day. Luckily, Henrik picked me up from the bus station and we immediately got on a train to Potsdam to go to the Bella Vita, a potluck held outside Jörn's former squat, the Boumanns.

"Recognize it?" Jörn asked when we arrived outside of it. I was not too surprised by the way it looked but I barely recognized it. It had been evicted about 2 months prior and was now totally barricaded. Cops were stationed out front 24 hours a day and a video camera was installed in the backyard. I peeked into the cop car and could see the live footage of a breeze blowing in the trees. Talk about excessive. The food was amazing but I practically froze to death, thinking for some reason that it should be warm in July and therefore not really prepared for the miserable weather.

Henrik hung out for a little bit at the Breiti, Jörn's new squat, and left for Berlin while I decided to stay behind in Potsdam. That was somewhat of a mistake, marking the beginning of a drawn-out drama with Jörn that was to drag on endlessly.

#### Thursday 13 July

As is normal when I am jetlagged and fucked up from lengthy journeys, I ended up sleeping until 4 p.m. I rushed to the train to meet up with Henrik in Berlin. Sitting across from me on the train was a very stoic-looking guy in his late '20s or early '30s who was quietly crying the whole time. He was looking out the window like most of the other lone passengers but tears were streaking his face. It was very odd. There is something somewhat disturbing but comforting about seeing public displays of emotion. It always makes me think about the hugeness of the world, the complexities of trillions of lives. Those moments afford me a small glimpse into the life of one person until we part ways and I'm left wondering what has shattered his/her world that day. No matter how big of a shithead that person might be, for at least one second my heart goes out to him/her, who is so emotionally moved by something that s/he cannot control him/herself, even in public.

Henrik and I met at a transfer point at Alexanderplatz and go to his place, talking about Philadelphia's famous Peanut Chews (an amazing, chewy vegan chocolate). I included a few bars of it with every letter I sent to Henrik. "I don't even like them but I can't stop eating them." We went out for a little bike ride, stopping briefly at a great falafel place near a small park. Henrik took me to this crazy huge park with all these gigantic communist-era statues. There was one of a man smashing a swastika that I found particularly amazing. After a nice ride around the park we went to the apartment Thomas shared with his brother Keule. Thomas' girlfriend Nadine worked sometimes at this bar in a legalized squat so we headed there for a little while. Thomas expounded on his theory about why the Nazi movement was gaining such popularity. He thinks the left has nothing to offer young kids whereas the Nazis do. They have easily defined reachable goals and there are a lot of romanticized notions of violence and hatred that appeal to disenchanted,

#### EUROPE TAKE IV, PART I

Wednesday 12  
July, 2000

It took me  
three goddamn  
days to get to  
Berlin from



frustrated youth. Henrik had to get up early for work so we headed back to his place around one or so.

### Friday 14 July

Once again I woke up at the ludicrous hour of 4 p.m. The weather was dreadful but Henrik was gone and I didn't want to spend the entire evening cooped up in his apartment. I took the bike out to the remains of the Berlin Wall and took some photos of the murals that covered the crumbled structure. I sort of tried to get lost and stumbled across a nice little playground area with a crazy metal slide installed on the side of this large hill. I'm not much of a kid-lover but I was content watching children throw their bodies down the slide for a few minutes. I found a (pretty expensive) second-hand clothing shop and bought the winter clothes that were needed for the German summer. Somewhere near the Köpi squat I happened upon what looked like a trailer park. It certainly wasn't any ordinary trailer park however. Everything was painted in bright colors and it looked like it was set up for parties and similar events. I was to find out later this was a pretty common thing in Germany and was called a *wag-onburg*. It started to rain so I headed back to Henrik's neighborhood and went to the nearby tiny Asian grocery store. I found some bizarre vegan chocolates with banana and strawberry "gellee" inside. After cooking up a coconut curry dish, Henrik still wasn't home so I typed up some lyric translations for my band's 7", which I hadn't had the time to do before I left for my trip.

Thomas and Henrik arrived very late for dinner and around 11:30, we headed to a show. I wasn't very interested in the bands, Das Sex and 8 Days of Nothing, but I guess it was an excuse to see people. I was delighted to see Jens and Carsten there. Jens was a taxi driver and was just taking a short break to see the bands. Everyone remarked how surprised they were that he was there because he apparently didn't go to too many shows any more.

I was kind of surprised to hear that considering Jens was well into his thirties. I just always sort of assumed that once you got past a certain age, you'd be a lifer. Anyway, he seemed to be in good spirits and having a great time.

I had a horrible, sad conversation with Jörn at the show, one of several to come. As a result, I tossed and turned all night next to Henrik on his "bed" (mats with sheets on the floor). Sleep came fitfully well into the morning.

### Saturday 15 July

Somehow I managed to wake up at 10 in the morning, just enough time to go out and get some groceries to make breakfast for Henrik and Thomas. I was told never to "cross the tracks" by myself, for on the other side await hordes of Nazis but I had to in order to get to this certain health food store. I didn't see any Nazis though, just a bunch of shoppers. We had some tofu scrambler, this fake meat pate that came in an all-too-real looking sausage tube, and some avocado spread. After breakfast, I biked by myself to the Köpi-fest. I went all up and down the street it was on, Köpenicker, but couldn't find it and headed back toward the train

station where there were a lot of people milling around. I went up to a punk-looking guy and tried to ask him some questions in German. He looked confused, shook his head, and asked if I spoke English. It turned out he was from Poland and was also going to the fest so we walked together. It also turned out that he knew this Italian guy, Grillo, who I had met recently in Chicago. Weird.

I met all of his friends and hung out with them until I saw Herne. I told him I was thinking about going to Greece and asked him about the people from this Greek band he had toured with, Stateless in the Universe. He said that the drummer/singer had just ended a relationship and would probably love to have some company. However, he advised me not to go in the summertime since various parts of Greece tend to spontaneously catch on fire from the brutal heat. I sat in the grass for a little bit with Jörn, who had brought me a little present—a Post-Regiment T-shirt. I biked back to Henrik's and passed my friend Marian on the way, who was walking to Thomas' place. Nadine, Thomas, Jörn, Marian, Thomas' dog, his distro, and I all piled into his car to drive to Leipzig for a show.

Once we arrived at the Zoro, the show space in Leipzig, I saw everybody in Ebola right away, as well as my old friend Lenin from Chicago. I gave Mickey and Karin copies of the Severed Head of State LP and everyone else was drooling with envy. I felt bad that I had only brought 3 copies with me. I limited my purchases that night to a Demon System 13 6" and an Ebola tour 7". There is this wonderful phenomenon that I love so much about shows in Europe—the sharing of food. I helped myself (once all the bands had eaten) to some bread balls stuffed with croutons, cauliflower with nutritional yeast sauce, some kind of turnip soup, and a cabbage beet salad. Yummy. I had some really nice organic coffee and sat upstairs, talking to Keule for a little while.

Thomas, Henrik, and Keule's band, Y, were amazing that night. A few years before, I had been on tour with Y briefly and when I returned home to Newcastle, England, Mickey and Karin were flabbergasted to see that I had the then-new Y LP. "Where did you get this? Did you see them?" They were pissed that they lived in Europe and had never even seen Y but I, fresh from the US, had managed to see them every day for a week. Tonight was the first time that Mickey and Karin finally got to see their beloved Y. They told me that they (Ebola) had only played twice since I left Newcastle two years prior! They had yet another drummer (this was, I believe, the fourth drummer I had seen them play with), their old guitar player Andy was back, and their old bass player, also named Andy, had been replaced by a guy who actually held some kind of royal title. Mickey had not known about this whole title thing until that night and was absolutely fascinated. "So hold on. Do you have some sort of family estate? Will you inherit the family fortune? Are there peons under you?" He was pounding the poor guy with questions that he didn't seem to want to answer. "Look, I told you. I have not accepted the title or the responsibilities that come with it. It's not like I'm some lord or anything."



At two in the morning, Ebola still hadn't gone on yet. Andy looked at me over his fifth cup of coffee. "Kim, do you know how to play guitar?" I shook my head. "Well I'll teach you in five minutes and then you can play." They finally played at three in the morning and we headed back to Berlin and Potsdam at five.

*To be continued . . .*

...

My friend Matt once called females the "passionless sex." I would have to beg to differ. My passions are constantly being squelched by the "passionate sex" (males). Sometimes I feel like I'm going to explode with all the emotions and passions I have inside of me that have nowhere to go. I often wonder if I'm a robot, but then realize that there is nobody in this world I can express my feelings toward so they remain, turbulent and rumbling but completely repressed in my body. It's no wonder that I'm not willing or able to have a semi-normal relationship with anybody.

...

Music is medicine. Soundtrack to these past few months: Dicks-Peace? 7", Totalitar-LPs, Bastard-everything, Wasted LP, Tragedy LP, From Ashes Rise LPs, Manifesto Jukebox LP, Paintbox-Singing Shouting Crying LP, Calvary demo

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Reach me at: PO Box 2445 or [kimbae1@yahoo.com](mailto:kimbae1@yahoo.com). An extremely late response is guaranteed.



When people comment on the repetition of history's ugliness, they are inadvertently reaffirming the view that

humans are fundamentally flawed. Such a perspective is essentially religious in origin, and since religion as we know it is such a recent human development, with its roots widely spread, even the most atheist among us are profoundly and characteristically religious in this regard.

By commenting on the fallacies of those who believe in gods and other superstitions, atheists by implication righteously cling to constructs of rationality with the same kind of fervor they criticize of their religious counterparts. Likewise, implications of atheist critiques reveal a tone suggesting that because religionists believe in false conceptions of gods, spirits and so on, these kinds of people are also fundamentally flawed in some way. The assumption goes: "If only they were reaching their utmost rational potential, they would see things more clearly." The view from both camps is extended that humans are capable of bettering themselves if only

they did x, y and z. Note the ever-present conditional "if" that implies humanity is indeed born with a fallible slate.

Evidence to support this perspective bombards us overwhelmingly. So much so that to point out to the people of modern cultures that people are no more flawed than horses, snails and catfish has the same chilling resonance as serving an aborted fetus to the Pope. The reason: saying that humans are animals—something every preschooler knows—might mean our uniqueness—our art, our technology, our civilizations, our celebrated accomplishments—may not be as important as we purport it to be.

An implication of our animal nature is that we are subject to the very laws as the rest of the biological world. Which means: the Discovery-Channel marvels of the bear gobbling the salmon, the coyote gobbling the duck, the chimpanzee pack slaughtering members of another chimpanzee pack, the rattlesnake eating the desert mouse . . . each reflects that we too are part of the community of life—blood, gore, massacres and all.

Since civilizations inherently stem from the behavioral shift from, as biologist Colin Tudge puts it, conservative acceptor (hunter-gatherer) to exploitative experimentalist (agriculturalist and beyond), our conception of life tends to be skewed. As exploitative experimentalists, we command life at will, whether we procreate, grow, destroy or tame. Pet owners projecting false innocence onto their pets evidence this. When a dog mauls another dog, cat or a person, the dog gets punished for it. Biologically, the animal's behavior is perfectly normal. It is the human interpretation of this behavior that doesn't jibe with what is, an idea known as anthropomorphism.

Being part of the exploitative experimentalist culture also means holding life—most importantly, *human* life—as most sacred, which also means that any devaluation of human life is treated with, at best, suspicion. (It should be noted that the fashionable trends to "liberate" animals, refrain from eating animals and even providing refuge for animals are actually deeper statements bemoaning the human condition rather than the more overt claims of defending against animal cruelty.) Most often, however, it is treated with gross hyperbole.

Concomitantly, our conceptions of death are also laced with the same discomforted treatment. When someone dies, it is often viewed as an injustice of some sort. Something to be shunned. A taboo. Our death rituals are often inadequate in dealing with death, especially when reaffirming holding onto the dead by either ignoring the death in favor of clinging to a faith or by outright encouraging active remembrance of the dead. An example is the various causes devoted to people who allegedly died unjustly; for instance, the Brian Deneke article that appeared in *Punk Planet* a year and half ago encouraged us not to let go of Brian and his memory. Brian Deneke made for a nice story that functioned on one level to hook people into the hyperbole surrounding Brian's death.

With no other cultural instruments for coping with this kind of death, it is often the case that we plaster the dead person's



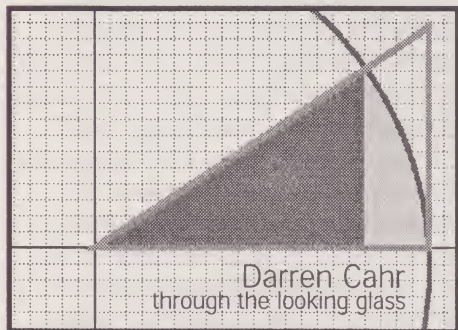
name and face on any surface as if to deny that the person, simply, is gone. When this happens so extraordinarily the dead cannot be truly dead. An inorganic state is projected by the living onto the dead.

Death is enigmatic, and as such, I suspect a deep humility is required when facing issues surrounding death. One position is to assume something that might require a major change of fundamental worldview: it is not we who choose death; it is death that chooses us. Since it is frequently the case that those who are suicidal are systemically entangled in dynamics not their own, this stance on death holds true for those who commit suicide as well.

From this stance, it can be assumed that there is only one right time to die. A logical extension of this view might mean that the many human tragedies that make the headlines are simply an unfolding of what is, that perhaps it is the case that we may ultimately exterminate ourselves. It is true that we enact significant roles and in many cases have choices that can change the course of events. I like to think that we will re-actualize our organic selves in order to continue to be a part of this world. On the other hand, we must at least entertain the idea that it may be our refusal to submit to what ultimately gels the rest of life that will lead to our demise.

Our stubbornness, in other words, could ultimately lead to life leaving us behind.

[www.secondguess.net](http://www.secondguess.net)



For all I know, by the time this column comes out, so much may have happened in connection with (as CNN is calling it)

"America's New War" that what I write here may be completely irrelevant. But I'd like to try to discuss a small aspect of the terror attack, and explain why it has me so pissed. This is short, but I think it needs to be said:

People have lost all sense of proportion.

The United States has, of course, done all sorts of bad things in the past. So has every other nation in the world. That goes without saying, and that notion is neither novel nor surprising. However, the fact that people (and it is quite a few people, on the left and the right) are saying that "we had it coming" is both offensive and disgusting. No matter what "problems" anyone may have with the United States government, that does not excuse killing 5000 people.

Or even one person.

The fact that people are reacting to the slaughter of thousands of innocent men, women and children of 62 different nationalities, who were doing nothing other than trying to earn a living, by blaming the United States is absurd—morally equivalent to blaming a rape victim for wearing "provocative" clothes.

As anyone who knows me, or has read this column since the inception of this magazine, I have a few issues with the government of the United States. I don't think you can be a sentient being without having a few problems with the government of the United States, no matter where you fall on the political spectrum. But for Noam Chomsky (a man I long respected—emphasis on the past tense) to belittle the suffering of the victims of this vicious attack because the U.S. has done bad things too is unbelievable. To say that it's not so bad because, well, the U.S. dropped an Atom bomb is logically fallacious. Just because something else was bad (the Dresden bombing) doesn't mean that something new (the WTC bombing) isn't bad, too. Past bad acts don't excuse new bad acts.

You can criticize the evil things the U.S. government does while also recognizing the evil in what others do as well. One critic, a columnist for the *London Guardian*, headlined her article "A bully with a broken nose is still a bully." The tone of many of these articles is, well, we had it coming, and now the U.S. will know what it's like, and (at least one article said this) "ha!"

But the thing I don't understand is this:

INNOCENT NON-COMBATANT CIVILIANS NEVER HAVE IT COMING.

Gloating over death is horrifying and bespeaks an "elitist" attitude towards the "little people" that is virtually pathological. I have nothing but disgust for people who hold this kind of simian attitude. Whatever your opinion on world events—hell, whatever your opinion on wars in other nations (including the war between the Israelis and the Palestinians, which could be solved in 15 minutes if both sides weren't held captives to their own extremists)—to pooh-pooh the suffering of the victims here is obtuse and vile.

I am not a particular fan of displays of patriotism—I think that they are generally meant as semiotic shorthand for a lot of things I don't respect or believe in. But I will be displaying an American flag at my home for the foreseeable future, for two reasons (1) to honor the firemen and police officers who gave their lives to save others, and (2) as a fuck you to people who don't understand the difference between the American government and random Americans with lives and families.

There are a whole lot of people missing from homes across this nation because of the actions of a bunch of hateful fucks. Whatever you think about what should be done about these attacks (and there's no shortage of opinion on that issue), I make one request: honor the dead, and don't tell me that they deserved it for their sins, or anyone else's sins.



This all reminds me of my favorite political writer, George Orwell. A lefty with a suspicious eye, he uses words that are as relevant today as they were more than half a century ago:

*"[T]here is a minority of intellectual pacifists whose real though unadmitted motive appears to be hatred of western democracy and admiration of totalitarianism. Pacifist propaganda usually boils down to saying that one side is as bad as the other, but if one looks closely at the writings of younger intellectual pacifists, one finds that they do not by any means express impartial disapproval but are directed almost entirely against Britain and the United States. Moreover they do not as a rule condemn violence as such, but only violence used in defense of western countries."*

—George Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism," 1945.

Sadly, how true. Can't we see evil anymore—or must we always process it through our own ideologies and obsessions?



#### ALBERTI RECORDS, 1946–2001

Alberti  
Records of  
California has  
closed its doors  
after 55 years as a  
vinyl manufactur-

er. Although I've covered four states since first dealing with Alberti in 1993, fate had me living a mere half-hour down the freeway by the time they'd called it quits. The final announcement was made by mail. Being the closest label-owner made me the first to receive the letter, and the bearer of bad news to other anxious label-owners. We had been given exactly one week to clear out. *After next week there will be no here at all [sic?], the doors will be locked and the keys to the company will be turned over to our lawyer, read the impenetrably bleak announcement. After that point anything remaining here will be sent to the dump.* "No here"? The dump? That sounded hopeless indeed. A lot of record labels started emailing me. I suddenly found myself popular.

When I and Andy and Andy's van arrived at their plant in Monterey Park on the 18th, I was armed with a mandate to retrieve all parts for nearly every Vermiform, Kill Rock Stars, 5RC, Punk In My Vitamins and Paralogy record pressed in the nineties, over 180 titles. I also packed; a clipboard, detailed notes on every release by name and catalog number, magic markers, liability waivers (removing our right to sue in case of injury on their now-uninsured premises), a bottle of Bushmills whiskey, a red Christmas bow and two pairs of woolen winter gloves unearthed from the pre-California section of my closet. Ebullition Records owner Kent McClard greeted me at the door with a hearty handshake. The last time I'd seen him was eight years ago, and I'd placed my first call to Alberti from his living room.

The whisky & Xmas bow were for plant manager Frank

Scalla. My eight-year phone relationship with Frank had left me anxious over meeting the man in person. Mordam employees had described him as "an old hippie". I'd pictured him more like the late actor Jack Nance in his *Blue Velvet* role, gruff beyond gruff. It was a little jarring to see the place in person. For all the rumors surrounding Alberti, I don't know a single label owner who's ever set foot in the place. Kent admitted this was his first time at the plant (while on tour three years ago, I'd made arrangements to "swing by".... I'd heard later that my last minute no-show had actually been considered as rude an offense as the \$500 bill I'd temporarily stiffed them for). Frank appeared. His Wilfred Brimleyish mustache surpassed all expectations. Following him was Bill Alberti, the middle-aged and mannerly grandson of the company's founder. We made our introductions and ceremoniously signed the waivers. "Any injuries around here?" one of us asked in half-mock nervousness. "Wellllll.... let's see," Frank said, stroking that incredible mustache. It was like seeing a famous radio DJ in the flesh. "One guy got three fingers crushed in a press a while back. That's about 2,000 pounds per square inch."

Kent directed us into the snarled interior of the assembly room. It was a little hard to get a visual grasp on the place—stuff, stuff and more stuff sprawled in all directions, crammed into loose boxes, shoved under tables, piled around trash cans. Andy and I were directed to six tidy, narrow aisles along the east wall. "Here's your stuff," said Kent, pointing. On a certain shelf I found a neat stack of all my mothers—the solid nickel master record that the more brittle and short-lived pressing plates are born of. Almost every release I'd ever pressed was here. One aisle over we were shown the endless stacks of paper labels and pressing plates. "Isn't it kind of disturbing seeing everything at once?" asked Kent, laughing. It was. All my triumphs and all my mistakes were neatly arranged and covered in a fine layer of dust. The entire space resembled a monastic library, faithfully maintained over the eons by dedicated monks. Except for the overhead hum of fluorescent lights, the room was silent. The winter gloves had been a false alarm... we'd expected loose stacks of razor edged mothers and had instead found each sealed cleanly in its own manila envelope. Flipping through these manilas released small eddies of fetid crypt air. I felt like the world's luckiest archeologist. The relevance of particular artifacts made it a little hard to concentrate. Here and there were the very plates that had pressed some of the most significant albums of my formative years, long before compact discs were a twinkle in anyone's eye. Andy threatened to stab me with the (presumably) sharp edges of the Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables mothers. I menaced him with Flipper's *Gone Fishin'*. Long Gone John of Sympathy For the Record Industry emerged from a further aisle. "I've got over 500 titles here", he said morosely, to no one in particular.

Behind the assembly room we found an equally spacious loading dock. Here were hundreds upon of hundreds of boxes,



frozen in bankruptcy—some loaded on pallets; some buried, some loose. A bound tower of Lookout Records cartons teetered off an eye-level ledge at a crazy 45-degree angle, like part of a lame Universal Studios theme park ride. The clutter extended across the breadth of the room and continued into a second story loft, receding into darkness. Andy pointed to a series of aisles underneath the loft, also dark. Bill told us this was "mostly old stuff". We flipped the lights and gingerly started down the corridors of this auxiliary lost library. Faded boxes of labels hinted at the company's history: "*Wild West Recordings of Rialto, CA*", "*Kick Khadafy's Butt*", the "*Erotic sounds of Love*" series, the "*Black Political Power*" series. My excitement at certain Rollins Band labels paled next to Andy's near swoon at the sight of certain Nuclear Crayons labels. The timer light for this section kept shutting off, leaving us a few private moments to contemplate our immediate find as the other fumbled back to reset the switch.

On the 19th we brought a truck. And my mandate was widened—Jade Tree, Troubleman, early Slap A Ham, a stray Mr. Lady mother. I made arrangements for more people, feeling like the begrudging spy from *Our Man In Havana*—slowly hiring on sub-agents to help with the dirty work. We spent the morning loading pallets. Alberti had always kept strict East Coast business hours, 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. I'd been told this was because Monetary Park is "a hellhole". Standing by their loading dock in the cool dawn air, surveying the hills and swaying cypresses behind the plant, I wondered why. By 11 a.m. I understood. Outside the sun was merciless, the perhaps 40 feet of loading area a scorched airport tarmac. Inside, the oxygen was flat and wrong. Bill Alberti good-naturedly chuckled at my pampered discomfort. "This is like heaven to us. When those presses start up, it gets to 110 degrees in here."

Ken from Prank and Mike from Broken Records arrived mid-morning. They'd left San Francisco at 2 a.m. and appeared grim. Andy and I clawed through boxes with the euphoria of those disoriented by hot manual labor. When Bill Alberti found me perched between shelves & pallet, six to seven feet over the concrete floor, he politely asked if I might consider using their ladder. "No, we want to do this! *We signed waivers!!*" "Fifty five years and only one behanding," Andy added, giddy. "I think your safety record speaks for itself!" Later in the day, Long Gone John unearthed a dozen boxes of old Redd Foxx 7"s, pressed on the Dooto label several centuries ago. A very quiet and intense period of looting occurred until someone (me?) pointed out that we couldn't all sell these on eBay at once.

On the third day we reverted to scavenger hunts from my list. The dark loft was revealed as a graveyard of Alternative Tentacles jackets. Andy and I discussed which important mother would look the prettiest mounted on his wall and installed with one of those crafts store clock innards. On the envelope for the KRS 250 stampers I read: PUT BACK IN NOTHING WRONG WITH THIS PLATE SOMEBODY WAS LOCO. I overheard

the familiar disembodied Frank voice, explaining to the telephone: "this would've been 55th year." On a Kill Rock Stars box I found a sad, hand-drawn heart, crudely crossed out with magic marker. It seemed emblematic of something. I used a lull to debrief Bill Alberti. How long had they been in this building? (Since Eisenhower.) How long had Frank worked here? (Since Ford.) Had they ever refused anything on grounds of content? (Never.) Did he listen to any of the records he'd pressed, for enjoyment? (back in the seventies). Any problems with bootlegs? (They'd been raided by the FBI thirty years ago, but CDs had made the issue irrelevant by the '80s.. "after a while the FBI wouldn't even return our phone calls") We discussed some of the financial events that had led to the company's demise. An estate battle resulting from the death of Mr. Alberti (Bill's father and the plant owner) earlier in the year had triggered the final cash drain. But the economics of vinyl, no surprise, had been on a steady decline for the last decade. By 2001, their main customers were Mordam labels and Ebullition. And certain Mordam labels had stopped paying (he didn't mention any names and I didn't ask). "McClard always paid up front," said Bill. "He's a hell of a guy." Andy called out from the other side of the room, "what's this thing?" Bill showed us the recycler—used for removing paper labels from "remil". Andy picked up a chipped label, excited—"Hey... *it's Brown Reason To Live!*". Bill examined the shard, then looked up, stumped. "Is this a good record?"

On Friday we made one last van trip. Loading finished before two. Our repeated offers to treat Frank & Bill to lunch were bordering on the awkward. Bill hemmed and hawed and finally said he wouldn't have the time. Frank laughed and roared off on his forklift, cigarette dangling. I searched for more stray parts and found a few. A representative from a rival plant arrived, thumbing through his own inventory for different record labels (I might need to do business with him someday, so; no names). We introduced ourselves. "Our place is nothing like *this*", he said, nodding towards the disorder of the assembly room. "Actually, their plates and mothers were exceedingly well organized" I said, blushing at this man's terrible rudeness. Insulting Alberti at this stage seemed like head-butting a lymphoma patient. "Yeah, ok," he continued, "but... I mean, *look* at this place. We're nothing like this."

Bill agreed to take us on a quick tour of the pressing station before we set out. This was the dark cavern behind the assembly room, one I'd only peered in. He hit the lights, illuminating the mechanical guts of the operation. The drama of insolvency had seemed to overwhelm Bill, but here he was in his element—a guy as versed with steam-release valve mechanics as he was with a spreadsheet. We passed sacks of shiny pellets from Keysor Corp of Saugus, CA. This was the Alberti's prime number—raw vinyl. I'd pictured it simmering in vats of blurry liquid. In person, it more resembled cattle feed, bagged and



unpretentious. We were shown to the record presses, large Semi-Automatic SMT's (for Southern Machine & Tool). There didn't seem to be anything automatic about these monsters. Each stood chest level, a weird jumble of pipes intersecting pipes, secured at points with 5 inch bolts that would be better suited to the bowels of a supertanker. "These cost us \$70,000 apiece." Even with the overheads, the room remained a dreary and atmospheric place. Stray beams of light strobing illuminated random spots of machinery through the roof fans. The windows were clouded with years of calcium deposits. Nearby, a woman in a bikini gazed at us from a faded 1986 Thermoking Of Indiana calendar. "They're worth about \$200 now," Bill added softly. He tugged on a jutting tube and a set of metal jaws rolled out and popped open. A faint hiss rose from somewhere deep inside the machine. He showed us where water cooled the system, where steam entered, where the plates and hot blobs of wax were inserted for pressing. I asked how many records one machine could make in a shift. "1,500 records can be pressed on one machine in any eight hour period.... that's if there's no bullshitting around." My heart sank at the inhumanity of the work I'd commissioned without regard for labor, as if I had been ordering up an endless series of pay-per-view movies. Bill added: "This is where it really gets hot".

I asked to use the office phone. A pang of gloom registered when I found my own name at # 27 on the speed dial. I'd lived in California for two years at this point. Why hadn't I visited earlier? Why, at the very fucking least, hadn't I sent a sympathy card when Mr. Alberti passed away? These opportunities to verify your humanity are rare and irretrievable. Clearly I hadn't been the worst financial offender (disclosure; I was, at a point in '97, a year behind in my Alberti bills. I also caught up in '98 and even prepaid for a batch of repressings, a rarity among the Mordamed. I'm not sure if this all equals out). But I had acted in collusion with every other stupid, thoughtless record label by default. It was too late.

We shook hands out front, the van packed. Bill and I exchanged email addresses. I told him I'd send lists of AWOL plates. The sun continued to bleach cardboard in an overflowing dumpster. "Well." I paused for a moment, unsure what to say. "What now?"

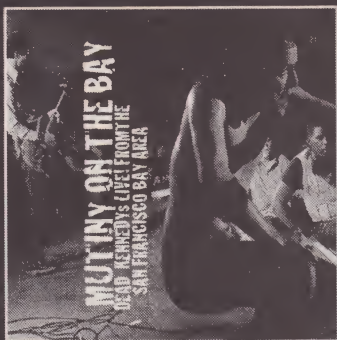
Bill shrugged. "Start over, I guess."

### MISCELLANY

*Punk Planet's* a fine mag, but timeliness is not one of its virtues. I can't imagine writing anything about The Attacks, or the war, in this column. Everyone else will probably take up this slack anyway. I can't even contemplate what will be in the news the day this issue hits the stands. I'm not even sure *when* this issue hits the stands. My first reaction on January 16, 1991 was to spend a day at the library reading everything I could find on Kuwait and Iraq. My initial reaction on September 11 was to turn off the car radio. If this job hadn't come along when it did, I probably would've spent the week sleeping and crying and trying to not think. ©



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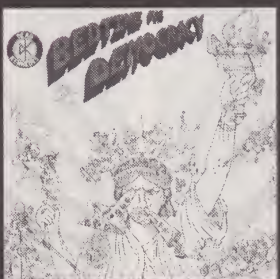
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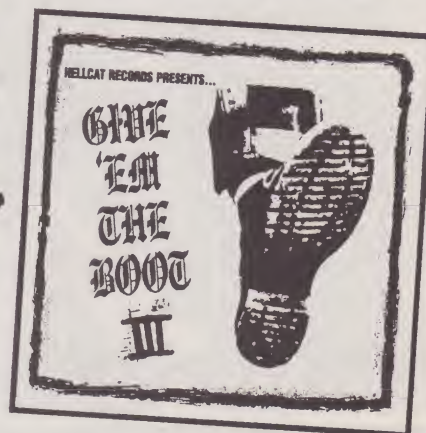
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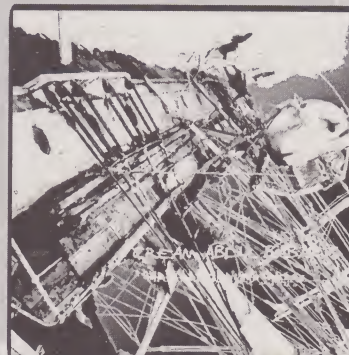


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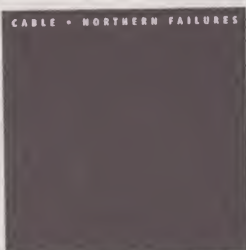


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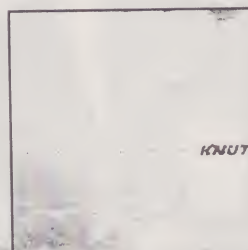
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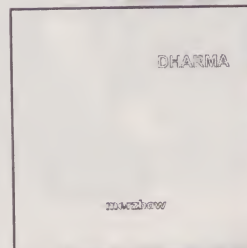
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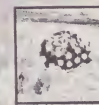
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# tom

"...the revisionism of music historians means that even minor punk contemporaries enjoy greater retrospective credibility than TRB or Sector 27 these days. On the other hand the key difference 23 years later is that I'm still around and they ain't."



# robinson

**G**o down to your local used book store, make a beeline for the music section, and flip through all of the dictionaries and encyclopedias to rock and roll. From the *Faber/Da Capo Companion* to *20th Century Popular Music* and the *Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music* to *The Rough Guide to Rock* and the *Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll*, you'll always find an entry for Tom Robinson. Best known for his hits "2-4-6-8 Motorway," and "Sing if You're Glad to be Gay," Tom Robinson was the first openly queer artist to achieve any level of commercial success, going straight (not to pun too hard) into the UK top 10 in 1978 with his first single, "Motorway."

The Tom Robinson Band's debut album, 1978's *Power in the Darkness*, is a landmark political recording of the punk era. Featuring deeply ironic "freedom is a universal maxim" kind of lyrics, the title track, "Power . . ." screamed at you like a punk take on Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" as interpreted by an angry young queer fronting a noisy R and B band:

Freedom from the reds and blacks and  
the criminals

Prostitutes, pansies and punks  
Football hooligans, juvenile delinquents  
Lesbians and left-wing scum . . .

Featuring a black and yellow cover bearing

a raised fist, *Power* was almost as much a cultural event in England as the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks* was the year before. Though not quite the same kind of spectacle, *Power*'s significance lay in its overtly political nature. Reconciling gay-positive lyrics that emphasized how queer liberation was part of a larger project of universal emancipation, the back cover of the album plugged Rock Against Racism, and in the American version, the inner sleeve gave out numbers for the Gay Switchboard hotline in New York and Los Angeles. These are among the many traits that allowed the record to age well as a classic piece of protest music that is incredibly hard to forget.

Subsequent recordings by TRB didn't have quite the same marketability, but Tom's influence would continue to be felt for years to come. Having collaborated with everyone from the 'Pistols' Glen Matlock and Paul Jones and TV Smith of The Adverts, to playing out with Mick Jones of The Clash and touring with Stiff Little Fingers, Tom carries with him a lot of history. Overlooked by revisionist punk historians, he still performs today and remains worthy of your time and attention.

During a brief stopover in San Francisco to play a show at the Paradise Lounge, Tom and I spent several hours talking about his career. The following conversation is what transpired.

Interview by Jon Ginoli

**When did you first go to London?**

I first moved to London in 1975 to get into the music business with a group called Café Society, writing pretty little songs like America's "Horse With No Name." I didn't think I was a good enough singer, so I was with two friends who could sing and write songs better than me. At the same time, I was coming out, getting involved with Gay Switchboard as a volunteer, turning up at gay conferences with my guitar, thinking "I could sing a couple songs." I had a kind of parallel career as a troubadour to the fledgling gay movement. Gradually, as Café Society developed, it became apparent you could get in the papers as soon as journalists knew that one of the band was gay. Café Society was starting to get publicity out of kilter to what it was actually about, and the other guys were getting resentful.

**And the music was not about that subject matter?**

No, but the songs I was starting to write were increasingly being influenced by that. The catalyst was an American group called Hot Peaches, a theater group from New York City. They came over to London to play at a small alternative theater space, and they needed a guitarist to provide backing. I looked at the publicity photo



of these queens in this trashy garbage can drag and, in my arrogance, thought, "Oh god no, I don't think I'm going to like this." But I turned up because I was too ashamed to say no, and it blew my fucking head off. It was pure adrenaline, sheer unadulterated, 100 octane gay liberation. They were the drag queens who fought at Stonewall, who fought for the platform from which their straight-acting friends were denouncing them. They were pure, proud, and out there, laying it on the line. That fired up this middle class, white, English, suburban, boy. ¶ I wrote "Long Hot Summer" based on their account of Stonewall. Right then in London it was a very hot summer. The cops were beating up gays and making easy soft arrests, running in stockbrokers from Surrey who weren't going to say shit and get their names in the papers. At the same time, they were also doing the same thing in the black areas, picking up a lot of kids on the infamous sus laws. That was my politicization—to see that it was the same oppressors affecting both communities, and that you couldn't demand freedom for one without the other. So Rock Against Racism was going to have to be an equal plank in the future TRB that was forming in the back of my brain, as my kind of gay liberation platform.

#### When did punk start to figure in?

I saw the Sex Pistols at the same time, at the 100 Club, and I realized that the next big thing is not going to be a folk trio. There were riots in Brixton; there were gays being beaten up all over the place; there was Hot Peaches saying you are either with us or against us. It felt like the apocalypse was happening. With all this

stuff going down, there were still lots of disco bunnies going to the gay discos, and when they got inside they'd get these little badges out of their pockets that said "Glad To Be Gay." It was a badge that pre-existed the song. Then they'd go outside and take it off again so as to not get beat up. I was infuriated by this glib little slogan. How glad are you? People are getting the shit beaten out of them two miles away! "Glad To Be Gay" came as a one-off song to be sung to a gay audience to attack complacency and to take the piss out of that badge.

#### So the Sex Pistols were really inspiring . . .

I woke up at three in the morning and said "That's it, I'm leaving the band." I was incoherent with determination and jealousy and rage. I was going to be in your face as the fucking Peaches; it was going to be loud. I was not going to care about musicianship. If Johnny Rotten could sing, I could sing. I didn't have a beautiful voice, but it didn't matter 'cause it was the time of punk rock. The beauty of punk rock was that the doors that had been shut in all our faces; suddenly the young punks came along and they kicked them open. The Sex Pistols had kicked the doors open at EMI, The Clash and The Jam were getting into the charts, and the NME were writing about shit that nobody knew about. As that door opened, us older musicians—I was 10 years older than the punks—who had been waiting for their opportunity got through that door pretty fucking quick.

You weren't the only older person at the

time to see punk as a liberating thing.

That summer, there was a sense that you were with punk or you were against it. A lot of older musicians went, "This is rubbish, they play out of tune, it promotes violence, it's anarchistic, it's got nothing to do with music," but others got it. People like Chris Spedding, a respected session guitarist, went out and toured with The Vibrators, because he got it. And producers like Chris Thomas, who made his name with Roxy Music and was a tape op on The Beatles' White Album, got it. We did the first TRB album with Chris Thomas right after he'd done the Pistols, and he was just raving about how great they were.

Reading through your web site, one thing that just astonished me was that you got signed in August of '77 and had a hit record by October. That's just unbelievable. Nothing works that fast nowadays.

It could only probably have happened that year. At the beginning of '77, the fledgling

It is the standard double-edged sword of political pop, which everybody from Stevie Wonder to Billy Bragg has had to deal with. Are you using your pop stardom to peddle your second-rate political ideas, or are you exploiting people's beliefs in order to peddle your second-rate pop?



band went into EMI and demoed "2-4-6-8 Motorway," and they passed on it. What happened was that we just gigged through that whole stormy punk era, playing in pubs, clubs, schools, prisons, benefits, anywhere there was an audience. It gave us pub rock fitness. Then we got really lucky with the NME. Julie Burchill, writing only her second piece ever, saw us and wrote an extraordinary piece, doing the gay thing to death. She said that "If this handsome young stud had been straight, his face would be on the wall of every teenage girl and they'd be signed to the record company, but because he's gay they haven't." Suddenly from nowhere we're in the NME, so there's national press. And once you've got that press cutting, you print it up and send it to other journalists, you send it to venues; that starts a buzz. ¶ I read an account of how Frank Zappa did newsletters that helped publicize his band and I nicked the idea. We'd give a newsletter out to people which would say who is in the band, where our forthcoming gigs were, a political rant, the addresses for Rock Against Racism and Gay Switchboard, what to do if you're arrested, and how to contact TRB. This built things for the audience. This wasn't an ordinary pub gig, you got something to take home afterwards that made you feel part of something going on. By that summer, EMI, Jet Records, and one other company were gagging to sign us. ¶ The thing that really pushed them over the edge was a youth program on TV called *The London Weekend Show* that decided to do a program on homosexuality. They'd heard about "Glad To Be Gay" in the *NME* and they phoned up and asked, "Would you like to come on our program and do 'Glad To Be Gay'?" I was dead cheeky and said "Only if you let us play '2-4-6-8 Motorway' as well, otherwise we're not doing it, forget it." It's punk you know, fuck off with your television. They actually came back and said "You can do 'Motorway' at the beginning of the program, then we'll do our program about homosexuality, then you can finish the program with 'Glad To Be Gay.'" ¶ Suddenly we were on the 'telly, unsigned,

on the cover of the *Melody Maker*. Then all fucking hell breaks loose. EMI is desperate to get it before anyone else gets it, they sign the deal, they bang out the single of "2-4-6-8 Motorway" and it goes to number four in the charts. We don't have an album, we don't have *anything*. In commercial terms, it was a disaster,

**Having carved out a niche as a pioneering gay artist, if you're hoping to sell more records, the one thing you don't want to do is end up living with a woman, destroying the one remaining shred of credibility you ever fucking had!**

because if we'd had an album ready, we'd be double gold easily at the time. By the time it was recorded and came out, the heat had really subsided.

**Plus, the hit wasn't on the album, which is one of those British things.**

The reason was entirely the Sex Pistols' fault. The Sex Pistols' album consisted of all four singles, and there was a stink, "We've got these songs already, what a rip off. That's not the spirit of punk!" So TRB, with great bravado, say, "You get a new album of all new tracks."

**How long was it from the first burst of supportive major press to when the rug got pulled out from under you?**

About nine months.

**Oh dear! That's short.**

Oh it's brutal. But fair enough, those that live by the fad die by the fad, and we got outrageously good press. We owed our preeminence in large part to the lucky breaks and early support, but you also have to say in fairness that we didn't have the substance to follow it up. Whatever the papers wrote, someone like Paul Weller or The Clash could survive once they'd gotten themselves up to that level of fame

because they were continuing to produce good, interesting records.

**I remember reading *The Boy Looked at Johnny*, an influential book by Julie Burchill & Tony Parsons, published in 1977, and it was obvious from reading it that the people they were dismissing had been their heroes five weeks earlier. TRB was one of the two groups lionized, along with X-Ray Spex, at the end of the book.**

It's a "punk" book, which is to say that there are certain things in it that they felt necessary to say not because they necessarily believed them, like dismissing the Sex Pistols and The Clash as irrelevant, but in order to aggravate people. The Sex Pistols tried to get up people's noses with "Belsen Is A Gas," not because they were anti-Semitic, but because they wanted to infuriate people. If there was anything guaranteed to get the next generation of journalists to really put the boot in on TRB, it was the conclusion of that book.

**People remember punk as being political, but listening back to a lot of the records, the politics are not nearly as up front for many early punk bands as it was on your records. To imagine that you are going to be rich and famous by doing political rock is very ambitious. Were people drawn to TRB because of the politics rather than the music?**

It is the standard double-edged sword of political pop, which everybody from Stevie Wonder to Billy Bragg has had to deal with. Are you using your pop stardom to peddle your second-rate political ideas, or are you exploiting people's beliefs in order to peddle your second-rate pop? Either way you're fucked. You can't even know when you're doing it if your motives are pure or not. Live Aid—why the fuck did people do that? But what you have to say is that hundreds of thousands of people in Africa did not starve as a result of that event. With Rock Against Racism, were we exploiting people's needs for racial solidarity in order to peddle TRB and make us seem more credible or nicer guys, or were we using our pop careers to in order to peddle these Socialist Worker-inspired agitations? It has to be great music with songs



people could sing along with and enjoy for its own sake. If you have people's attention and they become interested in your worldview, then you can share it with them.

**Did you find that your music attracted surprising allies and enemies?**

The music business has always had a larger than average percentage of gay men involved in it. Gay mentors would promote attractive working class men, a classic case being Kit Lambert with The Who or Brian Epstein with The Beatles. These powerful gay men controlled quite a large chunk of the music business in the '50s, '60s, and '70s—club owners, managers, people at radio. Coming up with a mouthy "so what, we're gay, get used to it" attitude, those people on the whole were very shy of me and TRB. ¶ Early on in TRB we approached the gay manager of an influential club for a gig. He said we could play there only if Danny Kustow [TRB's guitarist, who was straight] would sleep

with him. So we told him to fuck off. For him, solidarity with one's gay brothers, or helping the cause, didn't come into it. In the minds of that generation the only way "gay" and "music" equated was a chance to fuck some pretty young lead guitarist. For someone of my generation, who believed in living our lives openly and freely, it left quite a sour taste in the mouth. On the other hand, liberals and lefties who didn't mind anyone thinking they were gay—because they weren't—would actually go out of their way to help give us gigs and write about us. Surprising allies were the straight liberals; surprising people blocking us were the closeted gays.

**TRB was about as successful as you could hope for, but it fell apart. You made the second record with Danny, but none of the other original members. Was it the pressures of being suddenly successful?**

The pressures were immense and Mark Ambler [keyboards], who was only 16 when he joined the band, was the first to crack. We could and should have done more to protect him at the time. Instead, we fired him. The moment at which we felt we could hire or fire band members, that was the breaking of the magic circle. You have to have an unbreakable circle for that sort of band to survive. ¶ When the band crashed, there was a hollowness at the center of my whole being. I didn't actually have a steady boyfriend, a relationship with an actual human being. Then the career dries up, the band falls to bits, the press starts writing filthy things about me; come age 30, 1980, suicide attempt . . .

**But you were still making music during this period. Sector 27, an underrated record, and pretty much your only really rock album after your first one, had good songs, good atmosphere . . .**

. . . and Steve Lillywhite production. It was the bleakest album I've ever made. I had gotten heavy into S&M to deal with very low self-esteem—if you formalize it into psychodrama, you can control it and not feel so bad about it. I got into ever-decreasing spirals, finally got a therapist, and stuck with it for 10 years. From 30 to 40 I was in psychotherapy, and it fucking saved my life.

**I wanted to ask about meeting your wife. Your career had peaked in England, so it wasn't something that would have had that much effect in terms of getting in the NME, but in terms of your dedicated fans . . .**

It's a curious thing. The biology of it was less important than the personality. I still prefer men, I'm sure I always will, but the woman I'm married to is the person I want to spend the rest of my life with. It could have been a man; it just turned out to be a woman. In many ways it would be much more convenient had it turned out to be a man because of the professional embarrassment, and it would have been a more easy physical thing to get used to, because I'm much more at ease in bed with a man.

**The professional embarrassment . . .**

That was severe. Having carved out a niche as a pioneering gay artist, if you're hoping to sell more records, the one thing you don't want to do is end up living with a woman, destroying the one remaining shred of credibility you ever fucking had! That was a consideration, but in the end,

When I grew up you went to prison for four years if you were gay; today you have openly gay cabinet ministers who take their male partners to garden parties at Buckingham Palace. Today's gay kids don't get it easy, they never will, but they have gay role models to look up to.



you have to go with your heart. I'm a gay man that happens to live with a woman. ¶ When I first met her, I thought she was a boy. At a Gay Switchboard benefit, I caught sight of this man of my dreams across the room. I get up close it's like, "Oh fuck, she's a dyke." The normal gay man's response is, "I don't do bi." But if that particular dyke, instead of going, "There's some man trying to pick me up," gives you the kind of look like some foxy gay boy would, then you might waver. "We'll, I've done everything else, I've done water sports, I've tried all the other perversions." It's the ultimate kink for a gay man to try it with a woman. It didn't seem unnatural. I really had no time for bisexuality until it happened to me, I thought it was a cop out. I had to eat humble pie. There *is* such a thing as bisexuality, and it's not an easy path. ¶ I didn't want to be in the position of singing "Glad To Be Gay" on stage every evening and then come home at night to a girlfriend. So in my next interviews for both *Capital Gay* and *The Pink Paper* in London I said in passing, "By the way I'm living with a woman at the moment." There were a few eyebrows raised at this newfound bisexuality, maybe a couple of readers' letters about it, end of story. All my interviews from then on made this point on public record, so nobody could call me a hypocrite. Then, suddenly, two years later, in 1989, an English tabloid Sunday newspaper picked up on one of these articles. I refused to talk to them, so they made up a whole interview with me. They are scum. They used my life to try and undermine my life's work. They have an agenda: that straight is better than gay. You can see what that did in terms of how the gay community saw me. Since then, I've avoided mentioning the kids' names, avoided their pictures going into the public domain. I don't even mention my partner's name in interviews.

**There's an irony here. You have to protect your female heterosexual partner from being in the paper, whereas before you couldn't print your gay partner's name in the paper.**

Nobody wanted to know! All those years, nobody ever asked, "Who's your

boyfriend, can we have his picture, how did you meet?" But as soon as I live with a woman: shock, horror!

**Do you think things in Britain have improved on these issues since this happened to you?**

Yes, in my lifetime they have improved immeasurably. When I grew up you went to prison for four years if you were gay; today you have openly gay cabinet ministers who take their male partners to garden parties at Buckingham Palace. Today's gay kids don't get it easy, they never will, but they have gay role models to look up to. We have had *Queer as Folk* on the telly . . . fantastic progress.

**I wanted to talk about "War Baby," your last big hit.**

I took "War Baby" around the record companies in London; they all turned it down. So I put it out on my own label, and it got to number six.

**Putting it out on your own label and getting it to number six would seem to be in contradiction.**

A friend of mine at the time ran a small and highly successful indie record company. He said that although he wasn't able to sign me himself, the song was definitely a hit. He acted as my part time, unpaid A&R man as I recorded the track in the cheapest possible way. He persuaded a big time record plugger that "War Baby" was a potential hit. A bit like those "no win, no fee" lawyers, my friend then offered him a huge cash incentive if the single made the UK top 10. The plugger was very well connected at BBC Radio One, and persuaded Peter Powell, the main afternoon DJ, to make the song his Record Of The Week. With this in place, my friend then persuaded an independent distribution company to press up the singles on credit with no money up front. Again, a deal was done with the head of their sales force, offering him a new roof for his house if "War Baby" got into the top 10. All these people now had a motivation to work on my single above and beyond all the other records they were putting out. ¶ There's two parts to getting a hit: writing it in

the first place, and getting enough people to believe that it's actually going to be a hit. Or more precisely, getting them to believe other people believe it's going to be a hit. Once Radio One started tipping "War Baby" for the top and giving it power play, rival radio stations started picking up on it as well. The last £2,000 in my bank account was spent on taking out a full-page ad in *Music Week* [the UK's equivalent of *Billboard*] opposite the chart page. The fact that someone believed in the single enough to take a full-page ad in *Music Week* added enough credibility for the whole UK music biz to start going. That was my last gamble, and sure enough, the record went in at number 18 the following week.

There's two parts to getting a hit: writing it in the first place, and getting enough people to believe that it's actually going to be a hit. Or more precisely, getting them to believe other people believe it's going to be a hit.

**Does that mean people actually did go out and buy it?**

Oh god yes! Luckily people loved it and bought it in big quantities. Probably in much bigger quantities than I was ever paid for, but that's another story. Yet in the end I came out ahead, survived, and have continued to make albums ever since. As you say, the revisionism of music historians means that even minor punk contemporaries enjoy greater retrospective credibility than TRB or Sector 27 these days. On the other hand the key difference 23 years later is that I'm still around and they ain't. ☺

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*Jon Ginoli sings and plays guitar in San Francisco's Pansy Division. His latest project is The Planning Commission, a band dedicated to covering local politics.*





It wasn't so much a concert as a birthday party, even if nobody brought presents—but for co-founders Bill Baker and Randy Iwata, their baby label Mint Records' tenth birthday was probably gift enough. They started with a Ministry tribute 7" (remember Ministry?) in 1991, snowballed up a legitimate creative enterprise when hometown heroines Cub hit it biggish a few years later, and basically tooth-and-nailed their way to becoming one of Canada's best-known independent labels. But that's the by-the-books story. The important thing is that Vancouver's Commodore Ballroom was packed to the walls on August 31st—no mean feat for one of the bigger clubs in the city—with fans flying in from as far away as New York for the show. So happy birthday, with a gala event that lasted not one night but two (a country showcase on the first evening and rock 'n' roll the next) and provided a spectacular nose-thumbing for everyone who said the label would be a flash-in-the-pan a decade ago.

In the beginning, Mint was conceived as a way to provide documentation on the local music scene and maybe produce some lunch money along the way. It's questionable whether the latter has started happening yet, but for five years they towered tall as the home of Cub, purveyors of "cuddle-core," and are now known for carrying the works of current

phenomenon Neko Case. Over the years, the label has forged ties with Lookout Records, established a healthy niche for itself somewhat incongruously as an alt.country mainstay, and just generally just kept the rock flowing. The Smugglers, the New Pornographers, and the Evaporators have all called Mint home and they all continue to do so.

And even if it hasn't always been a happy home—we'll get to the gay-porn-ad-designing-to-pay-the-bills years later—founders Baker and Iwata have always made it hospitable. Stubbornly independent, stubbornly iconoclastic and stubbornly (even infamously) Canadian, Mint has hollowed out a comfortable little spot of their own just north of the American indie-rock drama onslaught. Maybe you don't hear this story too often anymore, since kids get websites and stickers before they get songs or soul in this century, but it's an old one and a good one, starting with a couple of very different guys a couple of years ago, who had a couple of ideas about putting out one little record.

...

Bill Baker: I think that all of the people on our label—OK, not all of the people, but anybody that's still on the label—we're totally friends with them!

Mint co-founder Bill Baker sits in one of the dressing rooms, enjoying his first beer of the night after doing an interview for national televi-

sion an hour or so into the show. He looks like what he is: the upfront businessman of the Mint imprint, and though he's not wearing a suit, you can see where it would come more naturally to him—at least more naturally than Iwata, who is so low-key and casual that T-shirts almost seem like tuxedos. And it extends beyond clothes: even in this oasis of calm, you can sense that Baker is considering 12 different things at once, but he still manages to remain upbeat, assured and well-spoken.

Baker: When bands go on tour across the country, a lot of the time they stop at my house in Summerland and we'll all have a barbeque, or whatever. That's one of the best parts about the label, just meeting a lot of really cool people and being able to do stuff like this. It's very weird and exciting.

The buzz off him is palpable; he's vibrating like a rocket about to launch, and he hasn't stopped moving in the last few days. At Mint's country showcase, he was ricocheting from person to person like a pinball; making sure that he got to say hello to everyone, that the bands were doing okay, even that he wasn't ignoring anyone inadvertently. Tonight's even more extreme. This is the actual anniversary—10 years to the day—that they released their first seven-inch split, *The Mint Is A Terrible Thing To Taste* (featuring two local bands, Windwalker and Tankhog, doing



A black and white collage featuring a large, stylized 'Mint' logo at the top, a central image of a hand holding a mint candy, and a large, bold 'SUGAR' logo below it. The collage is decorated with several maple leaves and a circular graphic element on the right side.



Ministry covers). Neither of the bands is around anymore, but Mint is—and on this night so are friends, family, bandmates, fans, well-wishers and the omnipresent press.

Baker swirls his beer (now half-empty) around in the bottle contemplatively while he thinks back on the origins of the label.

Baker: Really, there's kind of two stories depending on whether you talk to me or talk to Randy. We were both working at the radio station at UBC [University of British Columbia], and when we first arrived there it was a very hard nut to crack if you were new. We worked really hard during our time at the station to try and change that a bit and make it so that it was a little bit more friendly to new people. There was a real old guard when we first got there, and after being there for a few years we realized that we were sort of unwittingly turning into that. We had this realization at one point that we don't want to become what we [set out to change], so we thought, "It's time to go," and we really made sort of a quick retreat. Then it was this thought of, "Well, now what are we gonna do that keeps us involved in the independent music community?" which we were both very interested in. We kicked around a couple of ideas, but this we talked about one night in October of 1990, and literally the next day we were already starting. Randy and I had a million stupid ideas, but this one . . . we thought, "This is it. Let's do it."

The other side of the story, Baker says, is that Iwata wanted to do for Vancouver what records like *This Is Boston Not LA* and the old *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll* compilations did for their local scenes: document something important.

Baker: I hate to say his intentions were a little more noble than mine, but either way, we both wanted to do the same thing. That's pretty much how it started.

An hour and a half later, Randy Iwata was in an upstairs washroom relating his side of the story while he studies the tiles on the floor. He is clearly the Yin to Baker's Yang; it is this symbiotic relationship—loud and quiet, assured and self-conscious, showy and understated—that clearly defines them

and their working relationship. You'd have to strain sometimes to hear his voice over the music thrumming through the walls, but his speech was as hushed as it was earnest, especially when it came to the subject of providing documentation for the Vancouver music community.

Randy Iwata: It was something I wanted to do. It still is to a certain degree, though, I suppose to do that would require an immense amount of resources, because unless you go in with a very specific thesis, you can never pay attention or expose or explain everything that goes on. But putting out anything, at any time would—to some intents and purposes—be a document of something. We wanted to help paint that historical picture of Vancouver, perhaps. And, as it turned out, Vancouver and Winnipeg and Calgary, San Francisco, and things just generally. But certainly local is very immediate—very in your face, anyway—so, I guess that's where it comes from. Convenience.

Indeed, their first breakout band—the one which probably enabled them to stay in business for some of their first lean years—was Cub, a trio featuring Iwata's sister Robynn on guitar and Baker's then-girlfriend, Lisa Marr, on bass and vocals. It's hard to get more immediate (or convenient) than that, though no one expected them to suddenly gain widespread popularity and coin a genre of music ("cuddle-core") which would become immensely popular in its own right. Cub, over the course of their five-year career, managed to sell more than 60,000 copies of their three albums released on Mint, fairly remarkable for an indie band on an indie label in Canada.

And naturally, around the same time that Cub was taking off in popularity, Mint was growing by leaps and bounds. Both the perspective and the scope of the label were expanding beyond their native Vancouver, and Baker and Iwata's tight partnership was about to loosen up a bit. First, they hired a publicist, Torontonians Yvette Ray. And then they hired shadowy Grant Lawrence, who helped blow things wide open.

...

Grant Lawrence emerges from a back room of the Commodore at 3:00 am (apparently done sorting the paperwork on the show, which he promoted more-or-less sin-

**Suddenly we had no money, the band that took up 60% of everything we ever did was gone... That's when Randy announced to Bill and I that we're gonna have to get other jobs. New jobs for the first time in five years! So, we were like, "Oh my God!" So I lucked out and got a job at CBC [the Canadian Broadcasting Company]. And Bill lucked out and got a job at . . . well, basically at a phone sex company, and he now designs gay porn ads.**

gle-handedly). Almost everyone else is gone. He's half-dressed, drenched in sweat, and drunk as a skunk.

Lawrence is somewhat of a legend in the punk community: everyone seems to have a story about the Smugglers mercurial frontman, and not all of them are good. Many people start off with bad impressions of him early on, due to a certain brusqueness in his nature—which is often mistaken for his being an out-and-out asshole. Baker had this impression, and of course they ended up on



tour together—and eventually liking each other in spite of themselves.

Grant Lawrence: They hated me and I hated them. They were total asshole college-radio elitists, and I was the total asshole obnoxious little kid from the West Vancouver suburbs who had a new band that everyone thought sucked. And that band was the Smugglers!

But it turned out to be the beginning of a beautiful friendship, Lawrence says.

Lawrence: Basically, the relationship with the Smugglers and Mint is *Lethal Weapon 1* through 4. "*Lethal Weapon 1*: Danny Glover hates Mel Gibson. *Lethal Weapon 2*: he starts to respect Mel Gibson a bit. *Lethal Weapon 3*: they're best friends. And *Lethal Weapon 4*: they'll be friends to the grave. It's a slow bonding process where each party realizes each other's strengths and weaknesses and realizes that we're all just people having fun, doing a similar thing where we make music. And so, as soon as we got back from that tour, I started volunteering at Mint and I was writing really sassy one-sheets, really sarcastic and nasty. That sort of tapped into their humor and before I knew it we were best buddies and working together all the time.

And so the mid-'90s were the golden years of Mint: the years when Cub was riding high on the college radio wave, new signees Gob (not to be confused with the decidedly gruffer band from Nevada) were pushing to the head of the pop-punk pack, and the label could do no wrong. It was precisely then that the bottom fell out of everything. In the space of a year, Gob jumped ship, Cub broke up and Cargo Records—the Canadian distro at the time—declared bankruptcy, leaving Mint thousands of dollars in the hole and without their star act.

Baker: Cub broke up at the same time that all of that happened, and they were really our big thing that we spent so much of our time working on. Suddenly we had no money, the band that took up 60 percent of everything we ever did was gone, and we were left paying the bills and thinking, "What the fuck? What happened here?"

Lawrence: That's when Randy announced to Bill and I that we're gonna have to get

other jobs. New jobs for the first time in five years! So, we were like, "Oh my God!" So I lucked out and got a job at CBC [the Canadian Broadcasting Company]. And Bill lucked out and got a job at . . . well, basically at a phone sex company, and he now designs gay porn ads. Don'cha, Bill?

It's just the four core members of Mint left behind in the empty hall now, with Baker hunched over the merch table in conference with Randy and Yvette, essentially (and mercifully?) distracted from Lawrence's taunts. ("Don'cha design gay porn ads?" Lawrence asks again.) And despite the fact that he can't hear a word Lawrence is saying, it turns out (upon further delving) to be more-or-less true.

Baker: Grant is a producer at the CBC; I'm a freelance graphic designer and so is Randy; and Yvette runs her own freelance publicity company in Toronto, so we all have day jobs. Some people think that's kind of weird, but I love it; I think it's a great set-up. Having that pressure made it very hard. You'd think, "This is a great band! I'd love to put out their record. But I know it's not gonna sell, therefore we can't do it." As soon as that element gets really built into the whole system it starts to really be a drag. I mean, I don't want to get all high and mighty about it. It's nice to make money off of a record and I know the bands like to get money too. It's great when it's about the money and everybody's happy and someone's making money and they're doing a good job. It's the shits when it's about the money and you have to say to someone, "Your last two records didn't sell that great so we're gonna take a pass on the third one," and I'm glad that that's never had to happen, because that would just be a heartbreaker.

But 1997 was a still a heartbreaker year, he remembers. Luckily, 1998 would be a year of happy endings.

Baker: Part of how we made ends meet was we completely retreated into a little shell. We moved into an office that isn't much bigger than 10x10 and in 1997 we only put out one release, which was Neko Case's first record. A couple of years before, between singles and CDs, we were releasing about 20 records a year. We went down to one, and that's how we did it. We

paid every bill that had to be paid, and we didn't spend money on anything. We completely hunkered down. That and Neko's success is what got us through. It was that simple.

...

Neko Case is, according to most folks in the know and all the folks in the Mint offices, the salvation of the label. Arriving like a bullet from nowhere (although she'd been hanging around in the same circles for several years), her first album, *The Virginian*, was released in 1997 and received massive critical acclaim from points as far removed as *Playboy* and *babysue*. The attention that she garnered pushed up record sales and allowed the label to start to expand again from its cocoon-like state. Her second album, *Furnace Room Lullaby* fared even better, and her appearance in the New Pornographers last year probably isn't the sole reason for their success—exceedingly catchy pop songwriting generally gets the credit for that—but it didn't hurt matters any. Their single, "Letter From An Occupant," was featured in the movie *Jay & Silent Bob Strike Back* and cited on Spin's Top 20 list as a "reason to get up in the morning." And in a typical stroke of luck for the label, their biggest chunk of good fortune to hit them in years wasn't scouted or spotted: she just walked in through the front door one afternoon with an idea.

Baker: Neko had been the drummer for Maow, and there's a couple of songs on the Maow record where she sings. We were always thinking, "God, this woman has an incredible voice." We would say, "Maybe next time you do a record you could have Neko sing more of the songs." But the thing is that Neko couldn't play drums and sing at the same time, so they didn't want to put too many songs like that in the set. So, we just kind of said, "Well, that's a shame," and that was the end of it. Then she came to us and had this idea of putting out this record, and so it was kind of serendipity. We just thought, "Oh, yeah! Totally! Whatever you need, we'll do." And it worked out wonderfully. It was very organic and completely unplanned happening. I often think if Neko's record had been a total dud we probably wouldn't be having this party tonight. It was really that important.



Neko Case is, in many ways, at complete odds from many of her label-mates, which include the two newest Mint additions—The New Town Animals, who rock like any of the decent punk bands from across the pond a quarter-century ago, and Operation Makeout, a flashback to Olympia's 1995 music scene, reincarnated north of the border. The concept of a cohesive Mint sound is elusive and a layman would fall short of providing any sort of definite answer, but Baker is somehow able to bring his usual spin to bear on the situation, and comment, essentially, that their sound is no sound.

Baker: It's not, "Hey, I checked out an act at the club last night! These guys have a lot of potential, man! We could make a ton of cash!" It's more like we're these dopey hicks just stumbling along. "Hey! You guys wanna put out a rekkid?" "Well, shore! We have a record right here!" This crazy sort of setup, but it seems to work for us and until it stops I'm gonna go with it. It's pathetic, really, isn't it?

Iwata: I think Grant put it well. He uses the word "quality" a lot, and I don't think that manifests itself in any sort of sound. Things have not sold a lot in the past, but still, they're items that I don't think we regretted putting out, because we liked them. We liked the bands; we liked the music they were doing; and we felt that we could contribute to helping make them and their music more well-known than it was currently.

In the past few years since the Virginian, whether by design or not, there has also been a definite trend of bringing quality alt-country acts into the fold, which according to Baker is just another streak of good luck.

Baker: Randy and I have always had a love of country music, especially traditional, old-style country music. So I don't think we would have done that on purpose, but since it happened and turned out to be something good we just keep going with it.

So far, they've managed to sign such promising country acts as Carolyn Mark, the Corn Sisters (comprised of Neko Case and Carolyn Mark) and Tennessee Twin, one of the label's most amazing new prospects. Founded by Cindy Wolfe, twin to famed Allison of

Bratmobile, Tennessee Twin provides a new style of old-country for the label. Where Case exudes the torchy 'tear-in-your-whisky' break-up-style country, and Mark plays a drunken-backyard-hootenanny, Tennessee Twin provides a kick-up-your-heels, twenty-five-cent Saturday night jamboree which manages to fuse progressive social commentary into itself. And, while Wolfe enjoys the country-friendly angle that Mint is playing, she also likes how they manage to keep their range diverse.

Cindy Wolfe: I think it's really smart of them to dabble here and there and just to bring more people in and draw attention to it instead of being, "We're the garage label," or, "We're the country label." They're willing to take chances and take risks. And it makes it more interesting. Music's more interesting doing different things. I mean, I come from a punk background; I love punk bands, but I honestly think that trying to bring back traditional types of country is punk rock, because "new" country—corporate country—isn't country at all. So, what we now call alternative country is trying to bring back [traditional] country. That's real country and that's the most punk thing going around!

...

In the end, though, it's just about Bill Baker and Randu Iwata, two very different guys who started a record label because they liked music. And as two different guys, they've got two different takes on the last 10 years—on the first timid seven-inches, on the rise and fall of cuddle-core, on holding together arguably Canada's premier indie label through lots of thick and more than a little thin. And so their answers to the next question: What now?

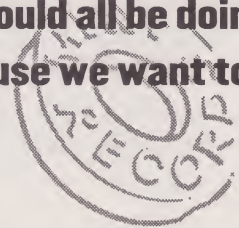
Iwata: I think what's interesting about recent history—the last several years—is that we have come not to rely on the label, or not to hope that the label is all of our source of income. We all have outside sources of income, and it took a long time to remove ourselves—or for me to remove myself—from the denial that that is reality. But, looking back at how things have progressed and what has become possible and what the bands have achieved, that has put the label into such a different—and I would suggest better—position than it was

back then, because all of us are doing this because we want to. I mean, we can stop this tomorrow. We don't really want to, but we can. And that sort of underlines everything we do. Granted there are obligations and normal things that you have to do, as anybody does, but underlying everything is the basic tenet: we're doing this because we want to. And 10 years from now, I would love to be saying the same thing. Our personal circumstances may change but we would all be doing this because we want to do it.

And testament to the differences and similarities in their personalities, relationship and the way they've made the label a success over the years is the fact that Baker manages to say the same thing completely differently and completely independently of his friend and partner.

Baker: I think that tomorrow morning I'll just start to cry or something. You know what I mean? It'll just sink in. I hope tomorrow I'll just be able to take a breath, look back on this and think, "OK. Now we'll start on 20 years." ©

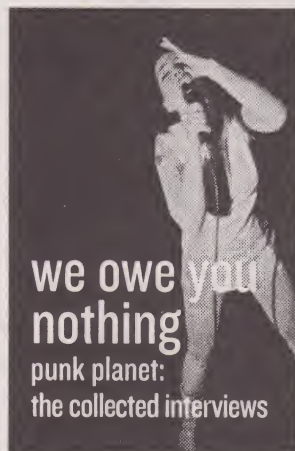
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# the underground speaks for itself:

Black Flag  
Kathleen Hanna  
Noam Chomsky  
Sleater-Kinney  
Thurston Moore  
Jello Biafra  
Frank Kozik  
Ian MacKaye  
Steve Albini  
Ruckus Society  
Winston Smith  
Porcell  
Jody Bleyle  
Mordam Records  
Los Crudos  
Negativland  
Matt Wobensmith  
Chumbawamba  
Central Ohio Abortion  
Access Fund  
Art Chantry  
Ted Leo  
Jem Cohen  
Voices in the  
Wilderness  
Duncan Barlow  
Jon Strange



## WE OWE YOU NOTHING

### punk planet: the collected interviews

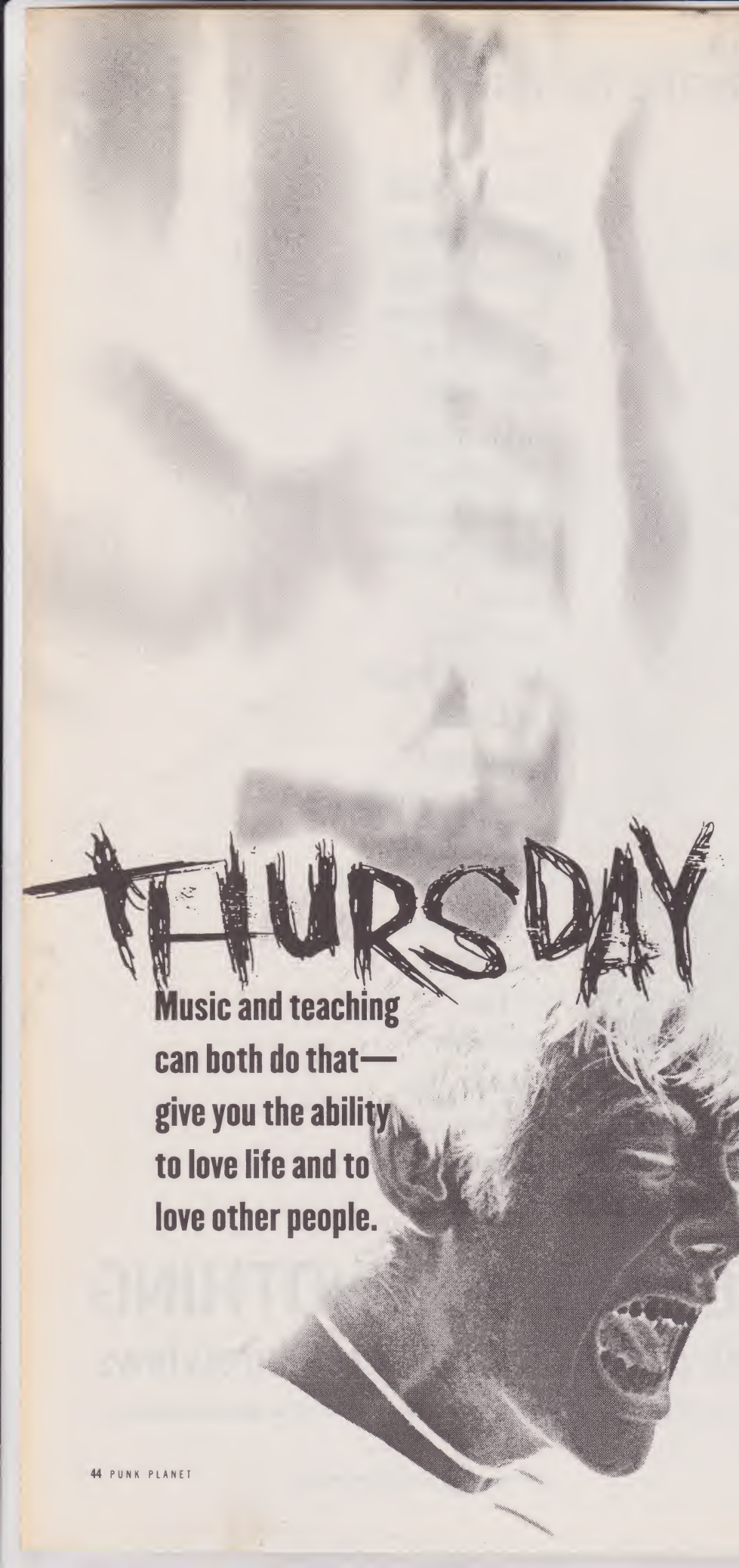
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**Music and teaching  
can both do that—  
give you the ability  
to love life and to  
love other people.**

I met Thursday, an emotional hardcore band from New Brunswick, New Jersey, several years ago when they were on their very first tour and sent me a demo. I put on a tiny show for them in DC with De Nada and The Challenger Commission, two local bands. Even though there were only 20 people at the show, everyone was impressed with the then-young band's energy and passion. Thursday's power lies in their humanity and accessibility; through their lyrics and shows, they communicate with the audience and touch on issues such as homophobia, imperialism, sexual assault, and suicide in a way that opens up dialogue among young audiences who haven't necessarily been exposed to politics in the context of hardcore. With the release of their second album *Full Collapse* on Victory, Thursday is gaining attention across the country and beyond. I talked to Geoff, their singer, about the band and the role that language and poetry has in his life and in the context of Thursday.

Interview by **Katy Otto**

**What's the greatest gift your band has given you?**

For the first time, I really feel like I have a voice that I can express myself with, and I don't feel afraid to say anything. Every other time I have written stuff for myself, I've been scared because there is something that is totally naked about expressing yourself. Knowing that the other guys in my band really support me, even if they don't always agree with everything I say, has really made me feel like we have our own voice and that we are unrestrained.

**What do you think distinguishes you from other bands in the New Brunswick punk community? What's your role?**

*To distinguish from* is one of the harder questions, because I feel very close to the New Brunswick community. I guess we want to be a conduit for younger people to get into DIY music. If we can get young people to be interested in what we are doing, because we have somewhat of a mainstream sound, which can be off-putting to older



kids in the scene, then younger kids can come see us, maybe find our record in a Sam Goody but then find out about other bands that we love that are DIY and find out about punk shows, distros, anarchist literature—a whole world that they might not have found out about. I would love to get to the point where we can help out all the friends' bands that we believe in, like The Assistant and A Days Refrain. If we were able to turn people on to them because we committed full-time to something that our friends might not be able to do, that would be ideal. We'd like to go around the world and tell everyone about these bands. That would be the most ideal role we could possibly have.

**I know you want to be a teacher at some point. How did you come to that decision and how does music fit in to that?**

I guess for me it's sort of a return. For both teaching and music, they were two spots that really affected my life. I had a teacher that really encouraged me personally and I had music that just turned something inside me on that was never on. I didn't get depressed anymore and I found that there were other people who understood. If we as a band could turn just one person on to that, and if as a teacher I could empower even just one person in every class to be themselves then it's all totally worthwhile. I get to give back what has been given to me. Music and teaching can both do that—give you the ability to love life and to love other people.

**Is there any unrest you feel with having to put everything in your life on hold to do Thursday full-time, and to have to trust the four other people in your band so much to continue doing this with mixed goals and mixed life plans?**

Yes. It's really hard because these four people that I love and trust so much have totally different goals. They haven't had the experiences I have had, and they all have different reasons for being in the band—all of them reasons that I think are

valid in their own way. But knowing that for Tom it is more about getting to meet people everywhere in the world, I worry that there will come a point where he says, "All right, I've met enough people. It's gotten me what I needed to get." That's scary because we all basically learned how to play music together and we have a really tumultuous relationship. Sometimes we love each other, sometimes we don't get along—sometimes they think I am totally crazy in what I tell people in our songs and sometimes they think I am totally out of my mind even though they support me. Even without the challenge, even if we all believed the same things, the energy would be different. It wouldn't be the same. I am really happy with the lineup we have now. I really love these guys, but it definitely is scary sometimes.

**What role does poetry and writing have in your music?**

Poetry for me is music without anybody else. Singular music. Some people can look at mathematics as beautiful symmetry and have it all just connect; they just see it that way, which I never could. But for me the way words balance each other, and the way you can so perfectly hit on a feeling that other people have had has a huge influence on me day to day. I don't go a day without reading poetry or something that has been influenced by poetry. It's really similar to music. It doesn't even necessarily say things more concisely, but captures things to a tee in a way that others might not have heard before. It's a vehicle for understanding each other.

**Have you ever done spoken word with poetry you have written?**

Yeah. I've gotten to do it a few times with my friends in New York City. One of them was really neat because it was all people I had played in bands with and we all got together and did spoken word stuff. It was so strange; I was the only actual singer that did it. It was great to see drummers, bass players—people who don't usually voice themselves outside of instrumentally.

Rachel from Indecision read some amazing poetry about how she feels about women's roles today. I'd also say that literature is a big influence on my writing today. I read a lot that I don't agree with, by people that I don't feel a real recognition with, because I think they can just so perfectly hit language. For example, I think William Burroughs is a complete master of the English language even though a lot of what he says disturbs me badly and messes me up. I'm really influenced by him and a poet called Michael Palmer who did a book called *The Lion's Bridge*. Then there are other poets who have more of a political take on language, and that fascinates me too—the idea that words can be so completely charged. One of the things I try to do in Thursday songs is take words that are charged and load them in a different way so that they have a new context.

**Do you have musical heroes in the same sense as your literary heroes?**

Yes. There are two reasons that I love music and literature figures. There are those people who I think I would love personally—I love what they are about and therefore love their voice and love hearing what they have to say. There are others who I think have opened up a dialogue stylistically. There will be people like PJ Harvey and U2 who I think might be irrelevant on a stylistic level, but I love the rawness of their expression. That is the same as Michael Palmer. Then there are people like Suzanne Howe who open up so much stylistically. She is a big into deconstructing language with poetry. I see her as similar to Fugazi—someone who wants to mess with the form, dice it around, say that it's bad and cast it down even though they love it. Suzanne says language is evil and a destructive force even though she has dedicated her life to it. She just wants to make people think about it and realize some of the elements of it that are destructive. Sometimes you need to say things to get reactions. ☺





**D**on't call them the BMX Pistols: even if their new album is titled *No Future*, Portland bike-punks (not to mention dyke-punks) the Haggard are hardcore like hardcore was when it started, all short sharp shocks and three-chords-and-a-cloud-of-dust energy. Would you believe guitarist/screamer Emily and drummer/screamer STS used to play in such comparatively wussier bands as Cadallaca and 1 Threw 7? No, you probably wouldn't (well, maybe you would if you saw their Cyndi Lauper cover band, but that's another interview). As fast as they are pissed and as smart as they are loud, the Haggard's not-even-close-to-indie-pop songs make politics intensely personal. These aren't distracted critiques of some system somewhere that could use a little smashing, these songs are Emily and STS's real lives, as activists, dykes,



feminists and women. In their bicycle utopia, you'd never get fucked with for being queer, for being a girl, even just for running your BMX down to the local co-op. Vote Haggard for president, they sing: "More bike lanes! Less roadways! More gardens! Less meat farms! More fucking! Less fighting! More!"

Interview by Chris Ziegler

#### How did you get so into biking?

Emily: I'm a bike mechanic—it's my job, as co-owner of a bike co-op. I just discovered how great it was four years ago and became fanatic about it. I had a long commute from my house to school and I was just sick of driving—I *hated* driving—and then I got this bike. I was mainly just biking to work, but when school started I would bike to school—it was probably like eight miles there and eight miles back.

STS: That was thought of at the time as being psychotic—people thought she was crazy. But now it's kind of standard.

Emily: I was pulling STS around on a skateboard, trying to convince her bikes were faster. Then she quit smoking and we rode our bikes from Portland to San Francisco. The first trip took 13 days. We did the trip again this summer and we took 17 days. Then STS got really into BMXing and hooked me on it too, so now we go BMXing a lot.

STS: I realized how sick I'd gotten from smoking—I got bronchitis. Then I quit smoking, starting eating better, biking, and drinking better liquor.

Emily: It's totally a stance against capitalism, too.

STS: It's definitely a political move, to be a biker. We bring our bikes on tour, park the van and then go off on a bike ride. One time in Utah, we were riding our BMX bikes around after dinner, waiting to cross the street, and a jeep filled to the brim with high schoolers yelled, "Get a car, you freaks!" And we're like, "What? Fuck you! Hanging out the window listening to Limp Bizkit!"

#### So what are the politics of biking?

STS: I think riding a bike is revolutionary because it rejects everything that American capitalist culture stands for.

Emily: Not only does it make you feel good, like help your body feel good and keep you in shape, but it also helps to save money. And you save time. It's like killing two birds with one stone, because not only are you getting there, you're also exercising on your way there, and it's more like experiencing the whole act of going somewhere, instead of just being like, "OK, I'm here . . . and now I'm there."

STS: And it's more communal, like it's really awesome to do Critical Mass or have a whole bike gang go from one party to the next all night long. You can do amazing things on a bike that you can't do in a car, like my friends had naked riding at one point. You can take over an entire street and just be protesting using a car.

#### How does biking overlap with punk? What's the bike-punk thing?

Emily: Well, it's a lot more affordable.

STS: Yeah, a lot of people are broke.

Emily: And it's anticapitalist because people gain status by buying fancy cars.

STS: There's status in bikes a little bit, but sometimes it's like the crappier your bike the more status you have.

#### Do you ever compete that way, like, "My bike's got the most duct tape? The most spray-paint?"

STS: Kind of . . . the only way I compete is I really like it when I bunny-hop higher than anybody I know. We love BMXing, we go BMXing like once a week and try and bring as many people as we can. We have a bike rack on the van and then we put extra bikes in the back and fill up the car!

#### You really have a bike gang?

STS: No. But we were trying to think if we had a bike gang, what would we call it? I thought maybe the Fuckers.

Emily: We go to the BMX track in Portland, and we gave them one of our CDs, and they played it while we were biking around. The music sounds like what they normally play at the skatepark, but the lyrics are totally different.

STS: Like pro-queer and pro-feminist, which I think is hard to find.

Emily: Guys were really into it, and I think they had no idea what we were saying.

STS: I bet they thought Emily was a boy.

Well, typically, you'd figure a hardcore band that was really into BMXing would be like one of those over-testosteroned board-shorts-and-baseball-caps kind of bands.



STS: The only guys who are accepting, at least in my experience, are either older guys who have kids or younger guys who haven't hit puberty yet. And then there's occasionally a teenager that's OK with it. But my girlfriend Bob and I tried to go to this place called Dart in Olympia and these guys, as soon as they saw us there, they were like, "Hey, little faggots! What are you doing here? Get the fuck outta here? Do you wanna watch my friend suck my cock? He's a fag too!" And his friend would be like, "Shut up! You were the one who fucked up this jump in the first place!" And then they turned to us and were like, "Have you been riding these jumps when we're not here, you fucking faggots?" Right to our faces—they thought we were guys! They couldn't fathom that we'd be girls with our bikes. And we were just sitting there looking at them, knowing that silence is way more powerful than ever trying to say anything to someone like that. And that kind of thing has happened a lot. Even little kids will get attitude and be freaky. But mostly we go to this track in Newburg and not a lot of pro jumpers go there—it's a racing track—and we don't get harassed there at all.

Emily: Plus we're always the oldest people there.

STS: We usually go in a group.

Emily: But we're usually the only girls there.

**It seems like that sort of stuff is always so geared to super-macho teenage boys.**

STS: I know! What's wrong with us? We're playing on the boys' team—playing hardcore music and BMXing!

**Do you think of yourselves as a hardcore band?**

STS: I think hardcore is a label slapped on us for lack of a better term. That's fine with me, but when we first started playing together, we just wanted to play as fast as we could. She finally convinced me to start singing and playing. I had to learn how to scream—I remember dri-

ving around Durham one day saying, "I can't sing and play drums, I can't raise my voice." I hadn't done it since I lived in this crazy household where we yelled at each other and I didn't want to be around noise like that again. But Emily was like, "No, like *this*, not from your throat, from your diaphragm!" So we drove around for like a half hour in the van screaming.

**You mentioned how silence is powerful when you're in a tense situation—how else would you recommend people handle themselves when threatened by some random assholes? Any self-defense techniques you know for dealing with that?**

STS: Part of self-defense is knowing what is the best defense at the time. Like if I'm outnumbered by a group of guys that are really, really testosterone-high right then, *definitely* silence and getting the fuck out of there is the best thing. But there's been guys that have assaulted me or attacked me or approached me in some way, and I've confronted them and been like, "Get the fuck out of my house!" Or "Get the fuck away from me!" And de-escalation is really good, like, "Why are you so angry? I'm sorry."

Emily: Or if you feel really threatened, it's good to yell a lot and draw attention, maybe scare them a little bit: "Get away from me! I said no! Get away! Get away!"

STS: "Stop touching my arm! Let me go! No no no!" Taking a self-defense class is the absolute best thing to boost your self-esteem and confidence about dealing with a guy. Because a lot of girls, no matter what the girl's size compared to a guy, are really intimidated by guys. ¶ I didn't know it was OK to knee a guy in the balls if he was physically assaulting me. I could have gotten out of so many horrible situations if I had just done that one thing, but I was taught my whole life that that was not OK under *any* circumstances. Which is so odd. And now I love to kick guys in the balls! It's just something real exciting for me! [laughs]

**Do you ever discuss these kinds of issues through the band?**

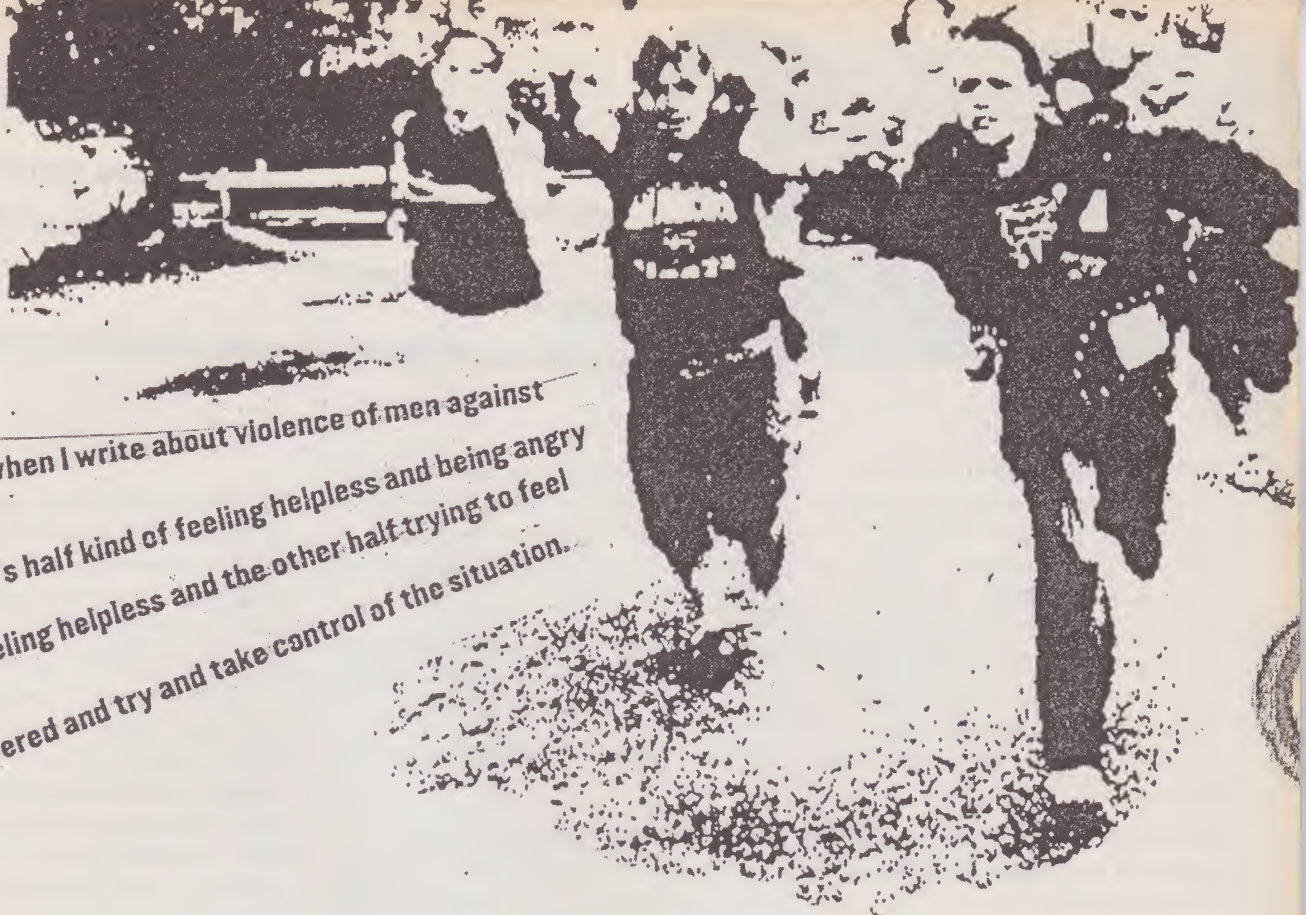
STS: Remember our song that we love, "MYOB Motherfucker"? A song about guys who intervene in your life and you're like, "Mind your own fuckin' business!" And also the song "Feminist Bullshit", which deals with how to deal with the media telling you there's a rapist and there's an alert on the town. When we lived in Durham, North Carolina, this guy was a serial rapist and it was really scary dealing with that, knowing you just weren't safe riding your bike alone, or even just sleeping in your own house, which is where he attacked women. For me, when I write about violence of men against women, it's half kind of feeling helpless and being angry about feeling helpless and the other half trying to feel empowered and try and take control of the situation. Or like "Tampons," even, which Emily wrote, which is about the industry getting women to believe their bodies are like these gross dirty things that need to be controlled. It's just a real natural thing to bleed and have a menstrual cycle—it's not even a big deal. It's made to seem like this thing you have to contain, have to keep a secret, and that is *totally* violence against women—because you're taught this so early. It's such a nervewracking thing when you're in eighth grade and you're bleeding and you don't how to deal. And the industry just robs you of a bunch of money.

**Looking back, how do you think you've changed since eighth grade?**

Emily: I've noticed since eighth grade that no matter what products I use—tampons, pads, whatever—you're still gonna get blood on your underwear. So I've just decided to bleed on my underwear.

STS: That's one way I've changed as well. I don't wear tampons unless I really, really have to. I went to a soccer





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game and suddenly got my period . . . what could I do? I didn't want to bleed on the field. If you bleed on the field, you get kicked off. Not specifically menstrual blood, just any kind of blood.

Emily: You don't get kicked off, you get asked to leave and clean it up. It's just the AIDS epidemic, and hepatitis C. You have to be careful.

STS: It's not a rule I argue—it's a good rule. I'm glad there's nobody on the soccer team bleeding all over me. *[laughs]*

Emily: And since eighth grade, I've realized it's not gross when you're bleeding and it doesn't stink.

STS: It doesn't, if you're a healthy person. Like a normal everyday person.

**What else?**

STS: When I was in eighth grade, I used to wear hot pink and white outfits—I had hot pink Converse and just everything hot pink and white—and then I had long blond hair down to my ass and crimped

bangs. And I wore magenta eyeliner.

Emily: Hot!

STS: Hot?

Emily: That's how you got the dudes!

STS: Yeah, I did win a kissing contest when I was in eighth grade. I got 25 kisses in one day. I wasn't quite a slut—I don't know how I preserved my reputation. Someone made me do it, like I had to do it to be cool or something. And Emily was goth. You should see these photos of her. She has like all black and a big fur coat—not real fur, though—and long hair.

Emily: *[whispers]* STS, shut up!

STS: And I was actually . . . from 17 through 22, a fanatical born-again Christian. They tried to cast the demon of lesbianism out of me and various things that I went along with for a lot of years because I thought being queer was wrong. But then I finally fell in love with a girl and I realized that if was so in love

with somebody, it couldn't possibly be that wrong. So I stopped being so fanatical, just stopped even dealing with that. I still haven't come to terms with any of that stuff.

**What would you say to people in that position, who are trapped between what they're feeling and what their family or friends are pressuring them to feel?**

STS: I just hope kids don't take their lives because they reject themselves. I *really* hope that they hang on to the small thread that keeps them alive. That's what I did. I nearly died because of it. I was so self-destructive. It was like I wanted someone to kill me because I didn't want to kill myself because I thought I would go to hell if I did.

Emily: And only you know what's best for you—not your parents, not your friends, no one but you.

STS: Yeah, no matter what anybody says. No matter what or who you think you might be, only you know, and that's per-





I think when people express something they believe in a story form, it seems to make a lot more sense, I tend to enjoy lyrics that are not condescending, that are coming from the narrator's experience, that tell it like it is, maybe give reasons or examples.

fectly fine. Whatever you want to be, especially if it's not hurting yourself or anyone else. Like if you think you're going to be like a murderer, maybe you need some help. [laughs]. But if you just think you're gay, it's fine! Have a party, it's no problem! There's plenty of gay people in the world. A lot of people think that it's OK for other people and not themselves, and that's a hard ridge to get over.

**What kind of experiences have you had with sexism and homophobia coming from people involved in punk?**

Emily: I've heard and seen things on both sides. I've seen punk people—punk men—be really supportive, being so cool and so right on and feminist, but I've also seen the opposite. Guys at shows grabbing the girl singer's tits or something.

STS: Yeah. Or objectifying women, like guys really like to objectify female musicians, especially punk girls.

Emily: I think like any scene, it has those people who are good about things and those people who need to work on themselves.

STS: There's so many female bands—punk or indie or whatever—in Portland, so I think a lot of guys are educated there. They've been around women playing music for years now, so it's not an anomaly anymore. But I think in some weird podunk towns we go to, the guys are so supportive and are so into girls playing music, and I don't feel objecti-

fied at all, or made into this strange phenomenon. They're like, "I love it! I gave my little sister my guitar!" And then in other towns, the guys will leave the room while the girls play.

Emily: I like to hear guys' opinions on topics we choose to talk about. People who are coming up to us aren't going to criticize.

**So what do guys talk about when they talk to you?**

STS: Guys like to get all technical on Emily, like guitar stuff. No guys *ever* talk to me. Except one guy in DC, who was totally talking to me all night, and I was like, "Don't you realize I'm gay?" And he's like, "Yeah, but I think I can change that!" And he was kind of charming, but I was like, "Um, thanks, I appreciate the effort." ¶ I really like bands like Aüs Rotten or Anti Product. Aüs Rotten, those guys talk about feminism, sing about domestic violence, sing about women's equality. The same with Anti Product—they're very vocal and real emotional about their experiences with feminism. I think it's really powerful. I love it when guys sing about that sort of thing. Young punk boys can be more misogynistic than jock boys, so it's important that their role models talk about that.

**What do you think is the key to making effective political art?**

Emily: Just say what you think and what you mean in the most poetic way. Not just "misogyny is bad." You have to *show* it.

STS: I think when people express something they believe in a story form, it seems to make a lot more sense. I tend to enjoy lyrics that are not condescending, that are coming from the narrator's experience, that tell it like it is, maybe give reasons or examples. Singing how it sucks to be leered at when you walk down the street every moment of your life. I think when we started the Haggard and we realized we were going to be singing in a two piece and writing lyrics, we felt that the only things worth singing about were things we cared about. Like our song "Feminist Bullshit," about a serial rapist that was loose and it was really scary. Singing about it really helped because it educated people about the situation and it was a way to vent, a way to say we're not gonna stand for that—and a way to express grief and anger.

**So what do you think are the most important things you do through the Haggard?**

STS: Being out as queer is my most important thing.

Emily: And being feminist.

STS: Definitely giving feminism a good name, giving it props and support.

**Why?**

Emily: Because growing up without role models sucks. ©



# 20 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND VORTIS

**1. When did your band form?**

In July, 2000.

**2. When will it break up?**

We don't think about that.

**3. What have you released so far?**

An EP called *Violent Structures*, which is available at gigs and from our website ([www.angelfire.com/indie/vortis](http://www.angelfire.com/indie/vortis)).

**4. Why do you play the music that you play?**

We want to get people agitated against the establishment and have fun doing it.

**5. What is the weirdest thing that has ever happened at a show?**

A bunch of activists brought a couple of American flags to a gig after 9/11 and the crowd started ripping them up and throwing the pieces into the air—a true anti-flag orgy, tearing through the oppressive public mood of hyper-“patriotism.”

**6. What is the best show you've ever played?**

Nevin's Live in Evanston, IL on 11/24/01. That's where the flag incident took place; the rapport with the crowd was amazing and everyone let go of their repression.

**7. State your purpose.**

To carry on the spirit of the extreme 1914-1915 art movement known as Vorticism whose announced aim was to create VIOLENT STRUCTURES OF ADOLESCENT CLEARNESS; hence, our name Vortis, short for Vorticism.

**8. What were the runner up names for the band?**

We forgot them on the spot.

**9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea what you play?**

We're an AGITAINMENT band; we agitate by entertaining and entertain by agitating.

**10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?**

We're an anarchist punk band with an anti-globalization message.

**11. What does the band fight about the most?**

Believe it or not, we don't fight; we reserve our aggression for the system.

**12. What is the antithesis of your band?**

Music of any kind that fosters complacency and/or depression, especially if it's pretentious; any band that's run like a dictatorship; any band that lets the industry tell it how to play and what to say.

**13. Outside of music and bands, what influences you?**

Anarchist political theory like Max Stirner's *THE EGO AND ITS OWN* and Georges Sorel's *REFLECTIONS ON VIOLENCE*.

**14. What is selling out?**

Compromising your message out of fear, greed or the need for approval.

**15. If you could make a living off your band, would you?**

Given our message, we never will.

**16. Where do you practice?**

In a urine-soaked building on the west side of Chicago.

**17. If you could play on a four-band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with and what order would they play?**

That would be different for each member of the band, I'm sure, but for me, it would be Motorhead, Anti-Nowhere League and whatever local punks were in the neighborhood, in that order, with us as the clean-up hitters.

**18. What goals do you have as a band?**

To be as intense, varied and inspiring a musical vortex as we can possibly be.

**19. What makes for a good show?**

When the audience is inspired to a joyous and raucous contempt for the powers that repress them, whatever those powers might be; maybe we live in a world where we're kicked around, but we don't have to be emotional slaves of the oppressor.

**20. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?**

We haven't done any covers yet - all our music comes out of the contributions that each of us freely make, based on our personal memory archives; the result is our own sounds (OUR VORTEX) that none of us can anticipate before we start jamming around some idea: we're not ready for covers yet.

For all info on Vortis see: <http://www.angelfire.com/indie/vortis>









backwoods-rock-n-roll experience has been. What's your town like and how do you guys fit in?

**X**BXRX could be the last best hope for rock 'n' roll. Or they might finally kill it dead. It's hard to tell, and when you see them, you'll know why. Live, they're a tactical nuclear device—when they go off, you'll see the bones of centuries of music silhouetted in the flash, and then it'll all be over. They're an instrument of mass deconstruction if there ever was one, dismantling the unwritten rules of this little subculture and serving up the charred remains with a cheery smile and a heartfelt handshake. It might not sound too pretty (but sometimes it's still almost beautiful), but it might pump a few last spurts of life into your coagulated fat-glob of a brain. Forget chords, forget choruses, forget everything they taught you back at the punk rock academy: BXRX come from a place on the chill frontier of creative expression. It's lonely out there, but you can at least be as loud as you want. For a few years now, they've been rewiring the nation one teenage head at a time, starting with their hometown of Mobile, Alabama. They finally got us. And here's why.

Interview by Chris Ziegler

**Have you always lived in Mobile? I grew up in a tiny little traffic-light-less town in Arizona, so I'm curious as to what your whole**

I'm still very much a kid, so it is kind of weird to say how it was, because most of it is still happening. I don't know if we really "fit in" with people here. Truthfully, I feel like we don't—politically and idea-wise. I know lifestyle-wise I don't, either. I think spending my whole life here has had an impact on me. It's a pretty fucked up place if you are not from here. But for me to say that I wouldn't be playing this music if I was from, say, San Francisco, I think would be a lie. I would still have the same interest, and every place has some sort of screwed up thing about it. I wouldn't necessarily say that BXRX fits into Mobile, but I don't see us in any other place. The local support is minimal if none at all. We are often frowned upon because we are doing something different.

**But you are doing something different: crazy 20 minute shows, CDs with no song titles, and the energy released onstage are all things that sort of set you apart from the bulk of bands out there. So why do you make the music and perform the live shows that you do?**

I think it is totally ridiculous to play long, unless you are Aerosmith. Everything that we do as a band has a reason. Even if we

cannot pin the reason down into words, there is a definite feeling for us of the way things need to be done—or at least a definite feeling of the way they *shouldn't* be done. We feel very satisfied when we have a set that is full of energy. But we are humans and we are out of shape, so we get tired pretty quickly and after about 15 minutes, it is obvious that we are worn out. Once some of the energy is taken away, some of the magic is taken away too. When I say magic, I am talking about a feeling that we get when we perform and a feeling that we get when seeing certain bands. There is a feeling that happens that cannot be explained and the only word I can think of for it is *magic*. In a way, longer sets are mimicking pop culture and all of the stuff that this type of music and performance isn't supposed to be about. If we are part of a subculture, why act just like the main culture? Maybe the question people should start asking themselves is "Why not play 20 minute sets and why not have no song titles?" as opposed to asking "Why do you?"

**Why did you decide to take things apart like that? And what do you mean when you say the subculture shouldn't act like the main culture?**

Basically what I mean is that a lot of people never question all of their actions, the way they live their life, how they operate. . . . One day it just hit me how messed up it is to make decisions and do things—even things that seem like small things—without even knowing why you're doing them or if you could be doing them differently or better. You do this shit just



because you've grown up thinking that it's "the only acceptable way they're done." I found out how much happier I am when I do something that I have spent countless hours thinking about and when I do

things that I have actual reasons to feel strongly about.

With band things, it seems

like set lengths, where you set up at shows, how you do interviews, what text goes into a

record, song structure, recording processes, stage banter, packaging,

how you choose your band name,

everything has a "status quo." And when someone does something outside of

that, people somehow think it's weird. It shouldn't come across as weird. With

art/punk/whatever bands, I don't think that anyone should expect anything to be

done a certain way. There shouldn't be any status quo. For example, a lot of people start acting weird that we have shorter

songs or shorter sets or no song titles or we don't have our band members' names

in our inserts or our band name has no meaning whatsoever. We don't do these

things to get a rise out of people and we don't do them to be different; we just

don't see any reason for us to do them any other way. These are *our* songs and *our*

performances and *our* records and this is *our* band, so why should anyone expect

anything out of us besides what we do? Why do they expect us to be doing things

the way they *think* we should be doing them? It makes no sense to me. I feel like

bands in this scene should have the freedom to operate however they want with-

out being questioned or ridiculed. On the other hand, at least people ask and try

to understand and maybe learn from what we're doing. ¶ Another example is when

bands feel like they *need* to say, "You're a lovely audience," or "we're glad to be

here!" or "this next song is called . . ." It feels so much better to say "You're a lovely

audience" and deep down *know* that at that moment, those are the most impor-

tant people in your life and that they truly are beautiful, than to say it just because

you've heard other bands say it. It actually makes sense to say "We're glad to be here"

when you feel like there's *no* better place you could be at that time than where you

are, as opposed to saying it just because you heard some other bands say it. It makes a lot more sense to me to not even

worry about song titles as opposed to wasting minutes of your life saying "This

next song is called . . ." when in reality it doesn't matter what the next song is called

and you could be doing something a lot better at that moment, like dancing or

hugging or making amazing sounds or just straight up realizing how great you

feel. But just to avoid any future confusion: I don't care if bands do these things

listed that we don't feel like we should do. As I said, no one should expect anything

out of a band. I shouldn't want bands to operate any other way than they feel they

need to. For all I know, we could realize we're stupid one day and start doing

everything completely differently than we do now. It happened before.

**How do you feel about being a relatively young—age-wise and band-lifespan-wise—band that gets some pretty intense comparisons: the Stooges, MC5, redefining rock 'n' roll, and so on? Is there any pressure to live up to that, or does it not even come up at all?**

I think they might react that way because everyone is so used to the gross amount of

bands that are totally recycling something that's been done by thousands of bands a

lot better for the past X amount of years. I don't think we are doing anything that's

completely groundbreaking and think that it is pretty much impossible to do that,

but I do feel that we are not trying to sound like our favorite bands and we

aren't completely recycling things that have been done a zillion times. I think

that what might set us apart from a lot of bands is the fact that we are inspired by

bands' ideas as opposed to how they acted on them; we fall in love with how bands

think more than the sound they actually produce.

**How did you get started in independent music, especially coming from such an out-of-the-way place? What were the bands that changed your lives?**

I couldn't get into Jon Bon Jovi no matter how hard I tried. It just wouldn't get me

going. One day in middle school I was looking through CDs at a local chain

record store and I ended up buying Bikini Kill. It all happened like that and just

branched out. I started as a guitar player when I was 11 but always had a passion for

drums. My wonderful mother bought me a full kit when I was 13. I don't think liv-

ing in Mobile—or Alabama for that matter—had any thing to do with me playing

music. I was going to play no matter what. Contrary to what everyone thinks,

Alabama is up to par with any other state, so living in a certain state, in my opinion,

should not have an affect on someone's talent. I really didn't get started in inde-

pendent music until I met our vocalist and guitar player. They were light-years ahead

of me. It was always amusing when I would pop in a CD of an independent band and

my friends would look at me with such

confusion.

**What do you think of everything that's happened to the band recently? Playing SXSW, doing all the tours, living the lifestyle we can only dream about—how did you react to stuff like that? When you started with that first practice way back when, how were you hoping XBXX would develop? How have things been different than what you expected, and how have they been the same?**

I didn't even think about development at all. I never would have thought we would

tour. That's a huge accomplishment. It's so incredible getting to hang out with such

amazing people all of the time. People we stay with and all. I'm loving it all right

now, to death. When XBXX first started, all we really wanted to do was rock. We

didn't care where it took us or anything like that. We thought we had hit the climax

our first time in a "real" studio. Can't get any better than that, you know.

**So what do you want for XBXX in the future? How much of your lives do you dedicate to music and the band now?**

I seriously dedicate just about every hour that I am awake to music. I *love* it so much. It is

seriously my best friend alive. When I wake up, the first thing I do is listen to records.

Then I shower and listen to records. When I drive to work I listen to music. I come home

and do the same. And when I work all the money I make goes back into music—that and

money I owe my mom. ☺

**I don't think that anyone should expect anything to be done a certain way. With art/punk/whatever bands, There shouldn't be any status quo.**



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# THE OLYMPICS

**W**hen I was a kid, I watched the Olympics religiously. From the over-the-top pagentry of the opening ceremony to the mind-numbing dullness of curling, I was all over it. The three weeks that it was on TV were the highlight of my year.

As I've grown older, I've gotten much more ambivalent about the Olympics. While I still like the concept behind it—a time when all countries can put their differences aside and compete in sporting events—it, like so many things from our youth, has gotten too wrapped up in crass commercialism and underhanded politics. It's hard to just sit down and enjoy anymore when you under-

stand the ramifications of what's going on behind-the-scenes. With Salt Lake City hosting the 2002 Winter Games this month, a local group of anarchists and activists have formed BURN the Olympics, a direct-action organization bent on bringing a radical critique of the Olympics to the forefront. With security at a maximum this post-September 11th games (security costs now top a whopping \$294 million), the BURN collective has their work cut out for them. I spoke with BURN the Olympics in early December via an anonymous e-mail account, the conversation was both enlightening and controversial.

Interview by **Daniel Sinker**





Why the Olympics? Most people, it would seem, think of the Olympics as a symbol of what *could* be—of countries coming together in peace to compete in sporting competitions. Sure, many would say, it's become perhaps too commercialized over the years, but its spirit is still one that's commendable. So what's your take?

We all like the idea of getting together with those who come from different ethnic, political, and economic backgrounds. It's a beautiful concept, but one that is showcased by the International Olympic Committee [IOC] to mask their motivation to make money. Lots of things look good on paper, but lose charm when put into action. Even capitalism can seem like a swell idea when you strip it down. ¶ The Olympics fuel not peace and understanding, but nationalism among participants and viewers. It's not about personal accomplishment, but scoring one for your country and government. It's this same sort of thing that causes racism, war, and hate, but when it comes presented to us as a good time, we are supposed to be all for it. ¶ The Olympics must also have an audience, entrapping people to be glued to a TV rather than go out and do something. Viewers are then told that they can be a part of the glory by buying certain things—ironically products like Big Macs that are the very essence of an unhealthy lifestyle. ¶ The super-elite athletes of the world come together to be branded and stand proud in uniforms cluttered with corporate logos. People are downgraded to another medium for marketing, creating walking billboards out of human beings. ¶ The Olympics are another facet of globalization in that profit and private interests are put above concerns for people and the environment. Public money is diverted to accommodating the IOC, its corporate sponsors, and the global media.

Hundreds of millions of dollars, if not more, are being spent to host the Olympics. It's a slap in the face to those who live on the streets because shelters are full. ¶ But actually, there won't be anyone sleeping on the streets during the Olympics—no panhandlers to bother the tourists. Salt Lake City is making sure that the impoverished will be swept under the rug while the world is in town. The original plans included housing the homeless in animal barns at the state fair park or sending them out to desolate Antelope Island in the Great Salt Lake. ¶ The city is currently patting itself on the back for spending only \$75,000 on a temporary overflow shelter for the games in an old factory. Just to give you an idea of what that means, as far as spending goes, let's look at another use of funds: Entrances to Olympic events will include fancy metal/drugs/bomb detectors that go for \$125,000 each.

**What was Salt Lake City like before the Olympics came to town? Have things been changed to facilitate such a huge event? If so, were they changed for the lasting benefit of the city, or were they done for the short-term benefit of tourists?**

Not counting the "scandal" with the Games being given to Salt Lake because we shelled out the biggest bribes, tons of public money has been diverted to accommodate the Olympics. As of November, over \$300 million has been spent on security alone. Think of what that kind of money would mean if invested in long-term solutions to poverty in the area! The Olympics are all about short term. They create a surge in the job market for a small space of time, then dump workers off as quickly as they were hired. You have to be pretty far up the ladder to get anything out of this deal. ¶ The event buildings in



past host cites are not opened to the public, but continue to be for the rich and elite. It's not as though the Games will create community centers out of the famous arenas. The public is given clogged highways, long lines, high rent, and a police state in their back yards. And they are the ones paying for this through their tax dollars.

#### **How did BURN come together?**

My personal interest in the Olympics began in November of 2000 when two of my closest friends were arrested by the Olympic Joint Terrorism Task Force. Both local activists, one was facing up to 15 years in jail for destruction of property at a mink farm, and the other had previously dropped trespassing charges brought up again. I began doing jail support for them, drawing me into what it means to be a threat to the five-ring circus. Late last spring, I began working with others in the area on organizing under the banner of BURN the Olympics.

#### **How is BURN different than the more moderate groups that are critiquing the Olympics?**

One of the first differences is that we are the only group calling for an end to the modern Olympics, not just an end to environmental damage or increased poverty brought about by the Games. The Olympics are such a sacred cow that people don't dare speak to the root of the problems they are crusading against. ¶ We are also in favor of direct action and property destruction. Other groups have yet to even hint at the use of civil disobedience, instead sticking to holding workshops, circulating petitions, and planning pickets. These tactics have never worked on their own, and you have to be coming from a very naïve view to think they will. It doesn't take a very smart person to see that the government and corporations couldn't care less about these stagnant strategies. If they could actually accomplish anything, they would no longer be legal—the government is not going to sanction its own undoing. We have to look at what *works*, instead of what makes us feel self-righteous. ¶ We have no intent of filing for protest permits for standing inside heavily guarded cages in designated "free speech

zones." It's not only hypocritical and in direct contrast with what we believe, but also an insult to revolutionaries who live elsewhere and are fighting for their very lives and land under fascist regimes. We would also be acknowledging and supporting the colonization and theft of the land by asking the city to allow us to be on "their" property.

**I think its important that radical groups work with other organizations, both like-minded and perhaps not as like-minded, but sharing in a common struggle. What kind of outreach work are you doing into the Salt Lake City community?**

I completely agree, and we are looking to build bridges with the other groups in the area who will be protesting the Olympics. But that doesn't mean that other people want to work with us. Most groups we have been in contact with have been friendly and helpful, even if they do not want to be associated with illegal direct action. I hope that everyone can learn that nothing is gained by creating rifts and factionalizing ourselves into the stereotypes of good protesters/bad protesters. Why make it easy for those who want to shut all of us down?

**With many of the larger, national direct action groups focused on articulating a radical anti-war stance, do you feel like you're not getting the exposure that you would have gotten during a "regular" year?**

Our web site was launched eight days before the actions against the US. We were getting a good deal of press already, but there was renewed enthusiasm to see what we were going to do. There were many who thought we would apologize profusely and go home. The last thing we should be doing is sacrificing what needs to be done to good public relations and keeping the donations flowing. It's easy for those in a position of privilege to switch their soap boxes to the most acceptable and popular cause. ¶ The peace movement is definitely dominating the "alternative" political scene at the moment. Maybe people feel like they missed out on some good times in the '60s or something. I think September 11th is serving as the greatest wakeup call for activists of our generation. We are finally seeing an example—be it for

what we believe in or not—of what it really means to take down the imperialist US government. It won't be with demos and letters to Congresspeople.

#### **How has the post-September 11 fallout affected the way you're approaching your actions or articulating your critique?**

I wish I could say that we are not changing our plans in spite of the "terrorism" hysteria. But after such a major event, it would be ignorant not to re-evaluate our plans and give everything a second glance. Our number one concern is not appearances, but about keeping activists safe. No responsible organizer is going to rally people to be killed by super-charged police, and we have no intentions of seeing people die over protesting the Olympics. We cry shame at corporations and governments who place property over lives, but we must watch that we do not do the same thing. If we mobilize against a target where we know there is a chance of people being injured or killed by police, we too are choosing pride and smashed windows over our own comrades. If we press forth because we say we must show them how mad we are, and that we will not back down, then it becomes a battle of the egos. Neither of these behaviors should be acceptable as we look into the future of the anti-capitalist movement. ¶ This is why BURN the Olympics does not feel like massive demonstrations at the Olympics are the most strategic move. We have to be able to look beyond repeating our same tired tactics of trying to shut down these events by placing ourselves against forces that are far more powerful than us. Why go head to head with gun-toting police officers in front of a Starbucks when so many remain unguarded elsewhere? It's not only a smart move to use stealthy direct action, but one that is long overdue. There won't be any more Seattles, folks. Let's wake up and go back to the drawing board, because this mass protest thing sure is getting old. ¶ We put out a zine that deals with this, and many other ideas and information, appropriately called *Taking the Offensive*. We want to see direct action, and in the best way that will keep people out of jail and free to continue their work.



Even before September 11, many radical groups had been infiltrated by state and federal agencies. Are you worried about that at all? Have you already seen harsh police crackdowns on BURN?

The group of those who are working on our projects has been kept small and dispersed. Hopefully this will soon be expanded to allow for a completely decentralized set-up, enabling us to still function as people get arrested. We know that we are being watched, and it is only a matter of time before they start arresting people who are associated with BURN the Olympics. ¶ The larger concern about police crackdowns is on the mainstream groups who are taking a public appeal angle. One in particular, the Utah Animal Rights Coalition, has been repeatedly smeared in the media as been the parent of BURN the Olympics. They are a prominent protest group in the area that works through education on animal issues. The powers that be would love nothing more than to bring them down by trying to tie them in with the "dreaded anarchists."

Coming back to the idea of the Olympics as a peaceful assembly of nations to compete against one another in sports . . . Again, it's not a bad idea, at least in concept. How would you change the Olympics to make it better? Or is it beyond repair?

The modern Olympics are about profit, take that away and it would have no one

driving the wagon. The president of the IOC surely isn't doing this for his health or amusement. ¶ It's so far beyond anything I am concerned about to hold big circuses for a few elite athletes while people are starving to death and the earth is being destroyed. Instead of putting energy into saving the Olympics, we should be coming together to network our resistance to the common oppressors we are all facing.

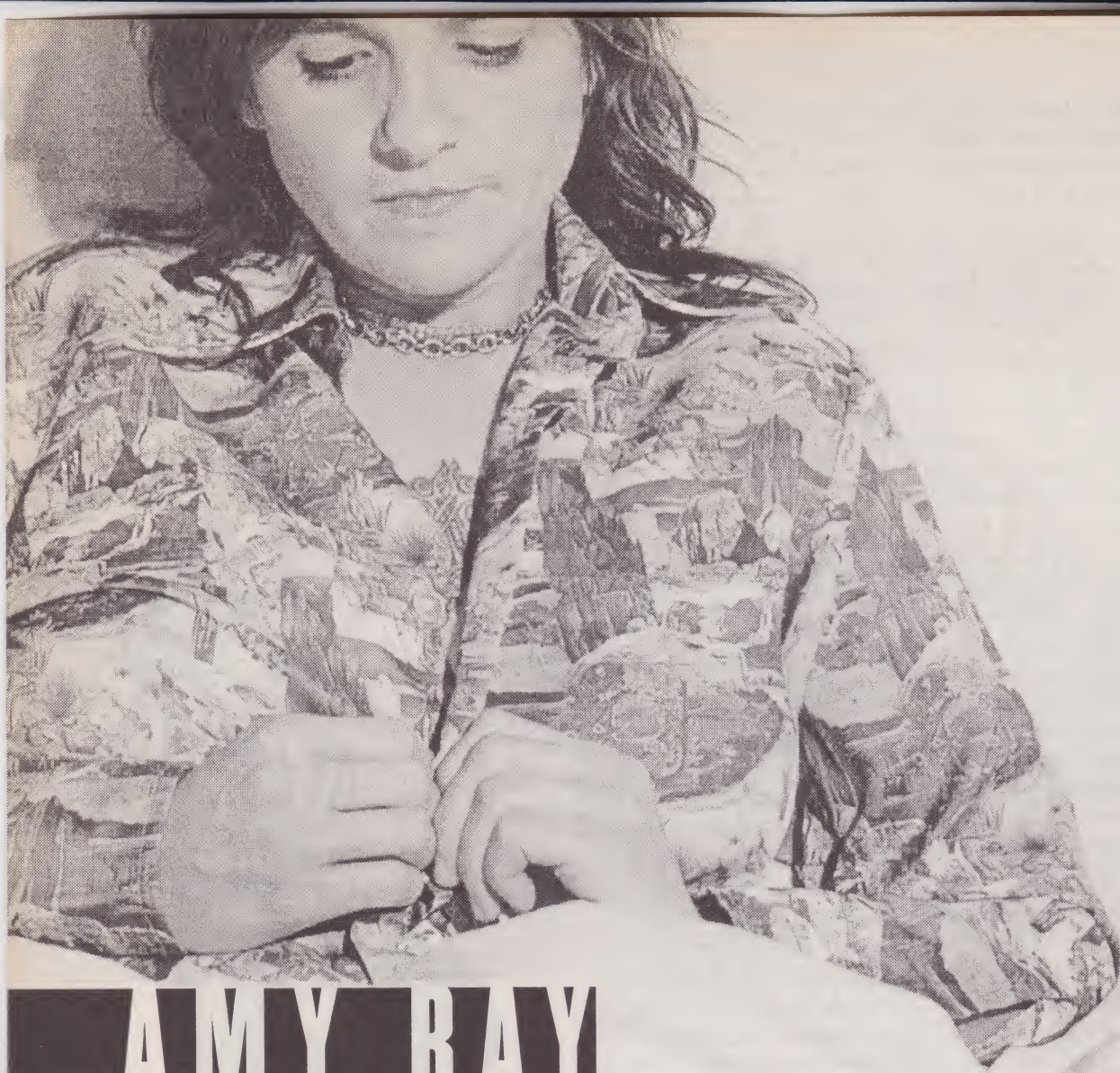
Do you feel like your actions are being heard?

Utah is one of the most conservative states in America. So you can imagine what it means to be seen as black-clad messengers of the rising anti-capitalist offensive? People are hearing us even if they don't like what we have to say. ¶ Beyond a lot of corporate coverage, it is a hard time to fight for the attention of "activists." And we know that there are other battles, and those far more urgent than the Olympics. We don't ask people to come out of their tree sits to join together in Salt Lake against one face of the problem. On the contrary, we want to raise attention about the Games in Utah, and show people that there is so much more. This is our community, and we are working here against a local problem with a global reach. And we want everyone else to do the same. Our name stands for Build Underground Resistance Not the Olympics, and that is exactly what we hope we can inspire people to do. ©

THE OLYMPICS FUEL NOT PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING, BUT NATIONALISM AMONG PARTICIPANTS AND VIEWERS. IT'S NOT ABOUT PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT, BUT SCORING ONE FOR YOUR COUNTRY AND GOVERNMENT. IT'S THIS SAME SORT OF THING THAT CAUSES RACISM, WAR, AND HATE, BUT WHEN IT COMES PRESENTED TO US AS A GOOD TIME, WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ALL FOR IT.







# AMY RAY

**A**my Ray leads two lives. The first is as one half of the Indigo Girls, the folk pop duo she formed with musical partner Emily Saliers in the mid-'80s when they both played the Atlanta coffeehouse circuit. From there, they went on to release eight albums on Epic Records, score radio hits, win a Grammy, tour relentlessly and play arenas as Lilith Fair headliners.

The key to the Indigo Girls' popularity is the juxtaposition of their two personalities. Saliers' gentler singing style and knack for ballads directly compliments Ray: she's a punk rocker at heart and her raw vocals and fierce guitar playing gives her band its much-needed kick.

That sensibility fuels Ray's second life as the proprietor of Daemon Records, the independent label in operation for about 11 years—almost as long as she's been an Indigo

Girl. Based in Decatur, Georgia, Daemon's mission has long been to nurture women songwriters and female-fronted bands with styles and attitudes that are not easily categorized by mainstream label marketing departments. Included on the roster are the Southern pop band Rock\*A\*Teens, acoustic songwriter Rose Polenzani, and the all-girl surf rock combo The Moto-Litas.

A recent addition to the list is Ray herself. Earlier this year, Daemon released her first solo album, *Stag*, a collection of straightforward garage punk that paired her with the Southern lesbian punks the Butchies as well as the Rock\*A\*Teens, Josephine Wiggs of The Breeders, Kate Schellenbach of Luscious Jackson and veteran rocker Joan Jett. To the unsuspecting Indigo Girls fan, it's a bolder and, in some sense, raunchier side of Ray. One song features a chorus taunting *Rolling*

Stone publisher Jann Wenner for his role in media sexism ("Lucystoners") and other songs stare down gender complexity, teenage violence and self-hate.

Uniting Ray's life as an indie label chief and a major label artist is activism. The Indigo Girls consistently are on the road campaigning for a litany of worthy causes including the environment, the prevention of nuclear waste dumping on Native American lands, saving the Yellowstone buffalo, advocating low-power, non-commercial FM radio and countless other political and cultural grassroots goals. This summer, Ray—backed by the Butchies—headlined Ladyfest Midwest in Chicago, the four-day women-oriented music and arts festival. She is a shining example of how mainstream success can indeed support a radical spirit.

Interview by **Mark Guarino**



## I feel like I've had a label for 11 years and if I didn't put my own record out on it, how much faith am I showing for my own label, you know?

When you decided to release your first solo record, why not put it out on Epic that perhaps would have promoted it and gotten you airplay?

Part of the reason I wanted to do this record was to be on an independent label and to support my own label. And I felt like I've gotten a lot out of being on a major label but I wouldn't say there's a great incentive for me to be on one right now. I think it's sort of obsolete, actually. Because they're just not in state of artist development or any sort of loyalty—although I didn't expect that either, I knew I was making a deal with the devil [laughs]. ¶ I feel like I've had a label for 11 years and if I didn't put my own record out on it, how much faith am I showing for my own label, you know?

Why did it take so long?

I just think I'm just late in my development. Because I think it took me a long time where I felt comfortable stepping away as the person running the label, number one. And it's not the reason I started it. I started it to work with other artists, people I consider to be great mentors of mine as far as songwriters. But then I got to a point where my songs got to be in a place where I wanted to do them by myself, so I felt ready. I felt more confident to go into the studio and really be in charge of a project without having Emily there. I had worked with her for so long at that point, it was really easy to fall back on her musically. Also I needed a break from the big studio, the big this, the big that and Emily was all for it. She was like "Yeah, I think it'll be good for you."

Your Indigo Girls records seem to, more and more, be split down the middle between your songs and her songs. So was it just the fact it made more sense to get all your songs to fill up one record for once?

I think we've always split it up that way but I think that, as we get older, we definitely are polarized a little bit more in some ways. And so yeah, I think I was in a mode of not really thinking in terms of a lot of harmony. What Indigo Girls really does best is harmony and that kind of interplay and I didn't want to necessarily pull us in another direction that I don't think is our forte. The next record we're getting ready to work on is all rootsy and completely harmony-based and so for me, it was good because I got the other stuff out of my system. I feel really loyal to the purist approach to this record.

When you toured with *Stag*, did you discover you now had two audiences: one that knew you as an Indigo Girl and the other as the leader of this punk rock band?

Yeah, I think so! I think a lot of it had to do with being on road with the Butchies for a while. Their audience is slightly younger and edgier in some ways and more women. It made me really look at the Indigo Girls audience because our audience is really diverse as far as age and everything. I appreciate that. But I definitely have found a slightly different audience with the Butchies. It's the same people who come to an Indigo Girls show early to hear the opening band when we have a punk band open for us [laughs]. They want to hear indie stuff and I recognize a lot of the people. And then there's Indigo Girls fans that didn't know if they'd like it and then ended up really liking it and there's Butchies fans who definitely didn't know who I was. It's been good.

What's been the advantage of having this record on an indie and why is now a better time to do that than before?

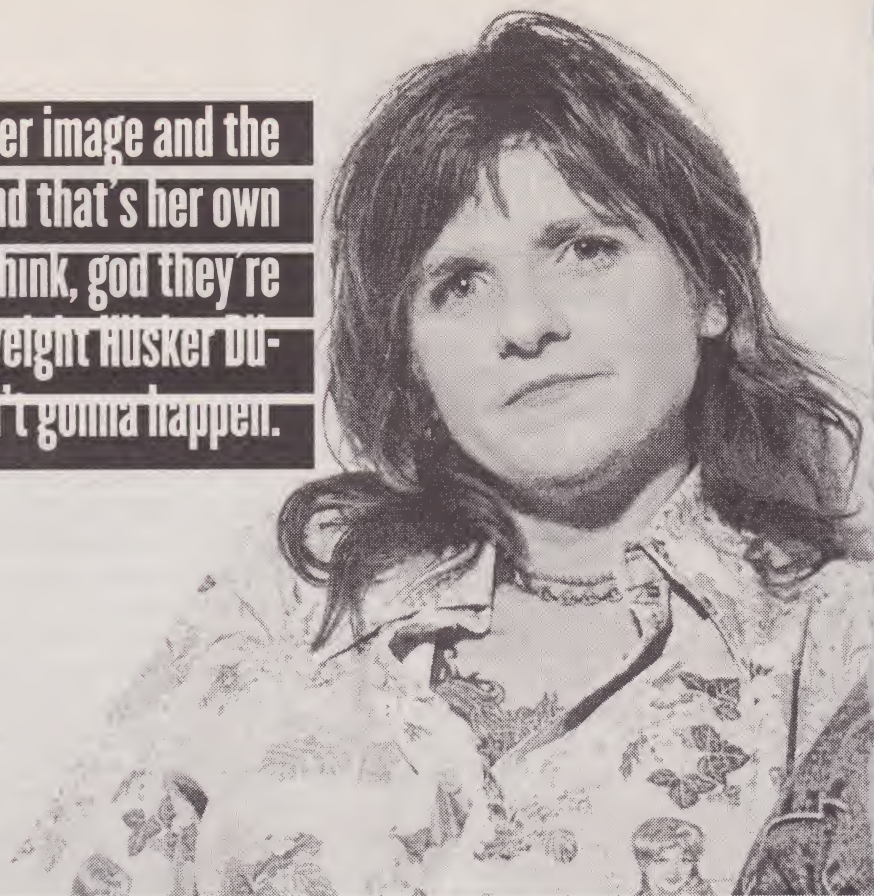
We've gone through a lot of the process of trying to figure out where the label is as

far as what our function is. And I think we've we got to this place where our vision is community based. We're trying to build coalitions among other labels; we're trying to build this infrastructure; and we're also very political. We got to a point where it's really working and coming together. ¶ I never felt like major labels were the best thing in world. I felt like we got lucky and we got into a situation that's better than most and got a lot out of it. I might not do it the same way again, but I'm one person in a partnership. But I just think right now, there's all this space created at the bottom by all the mergers at the top and people are really disgusted. [laughs] I think everybody's kind of going "Wait a minute, we do have to strengthen this infrastructure." It's not like I haven't said that all along, but it's like there's a point where you feel like other people are starting to understand it too and it makes you excited. ¶ I guess I feel like there's more energy down here than there has been. In the last few years, I felt like this energy has been growing and people understand it better and artists are coming back and participating. Kathleen Hanna comes back with *Le Tigre* and I see that as a really conscious effort to participate in a bigger way than what she had been doing with *Julie Ruin*. The Butchies made me feel that way. There's something about that when that starts happening with people that I look up to, that I think "OK, this is exciting. Maybe there's more revolutionary stuff happening." And all the protests against globalism, all this stuff starting to happen. College kids and high school kids are really savvy and I think more politically involved than my age group was.

I've always thought that with the number of major labels diminishing to single digits, that



**Madonna's huge because of her image and the way she works the media and that's her own right. But at some point you think, god they're not going to play the overweight Hüsker Dü-looking woman band, it ain't gonna happen.**



will only mean a renaissance of independent labels. That's one positive result.

Exactly, yeah.

And if you think about when the Indigo Girls started in the late '80s, a folk-based band could get on the radio. It made sense to be on a major because the climate was so different.

I think at that time, it would have made sense to be on a major label for *any* group, probably. But I think you're right—for us we were putting out independent records and getting college radio play and booking our own tours and everything seemed great except that we were really overextended and busy and our following was getting bigger. And I felt tired at one point and thought, "oh man, I need some help." I don't think I was smart enough at the time to put my politics and my career together in a way that was politicized. I think I was like, "Well, they're giving us creative freedom and they're signing Pearl Jam." It was a label that had signed Pearl Jam, Oasis, Rage Against the Machine,

and Indigo Girls all within a three-year period. I don't know, I felt like they were developing artists—they honestly *were*. And then it all started falling apart. When they started firing certain people who you think are integral to the integrity of a label, it's kind of like you felt they're losing their edge. And that's what happened to them, honestly.

You played Lilith Fair but also Ladyfest, a festival that's arguably the independent equivalent. From being on both stages, what was the difference?

Lilith Fair was this very mainstream experience. It was very, very corporate but at the same time it was a great thing. There was probably more diversity than it was given credit for having. I think there was a lot of effort put into that, but it's hard to do when it's so corporate because there's a lot of groups that aren't going to participate. Ladyfest and the Michigan Women's Festival are things that are more radical, they are a lot more holistic because they include this idea if you want autonomy

and if you want a strong presence of women in the industry, you have to teach people how to run sound and how to fix their guitars, and you have to network about booking. It's everything. It's a workshop. Lilith was a lot of music and then, things for sale. [laughs]

Did Lilith change your perception about a woman's place in the music industry for better or for worse? Afterwards, did you feel exposed to wider audience or did you end up feeling more marginalized as simply a "female artist?"

For us, it was a shot in the arm for our career. We were definitely exposed to an audience that was much more mainstream than our normal audience. Because we were on stage with people that had radio hits. I think [Lilith organizer] Sarah McLachlan's perspective when she was planning this was no one will play women together. Promoters won't put two women bills together; we're having a lot of trouble with radio play. But actually, it really coincided with a huge spike in women and



radio play. If you look at the timing, I'm not sure Lilith created the trend, I think it built upon it. For us, it really helped. ¶ But definitely, we suffered a backlash for it. A lot of women have been completely marginalized at this point and taken out of the radio format that was once very kind to women. Even if you're a rock band and a women playing rock music, they won't play you. So, in that way, I don't regret that it all happened but you have to figure out as a woman, how do you take what was going on and make it work afterward? Me and Emily, of course, we came before and we'll be after it. We just do our thing and sometimes it's really working in a mainstream way and sometimes it's not. We definitely saw a backlash against us at radio.

#### Why do you think that happened?

Part of it has to do with the 1996 Federal Telecommunications Act and it finally caught up to everybody. The mergers created such an advertising-driven radio station sort of vibe that everything was marketing and demographics. When you are at the mercy of marketing, you're at the mercy of them deciding what the trends are. And they get sick of any trend. And they'll get sick of white boys playing alternative music and it'll be a bummer for them. They ruin everything. They play to death every song, they put all the groups that sound alike into one pool. So at one point they said, "Well I'm sick of hearing that Lilith Fair stuff." Well what was "that Lilith Fair stuff" exactly? Does that mean

you don't want to hear anymore Paula Cole or you don't want to hear Sheryl Crow—they're two different artists. It's like me saying "I don't want to hear anymore white boys playing alternative music." And somebody else would be like "Does that mean you don't like Green Day or the Offspring—they're two different bands, you know [laughs]. I just think advertising-driven radio marginalizes anybody and it also commodifies *everyone*. And it's sexist in a way, probably because white men are in charge of advertising and so women are always going to be left out more than a man is, in that situation. But men are still going to be commodified, too.

#### It also affects the images we're seeing of women from the major labels: mostly hot bodied jailbait.

Yeah. It's a woman who's more submissive. I think radio is like, "We don't want to hear a woman if she's being aggressive and dominant. We want to hear a woman that's buying into what she's supposed to be doing." Women playing rock in a truly aggressive and revolutionary way, that's not going to be get on the radio. [laughs] If it does, it's probably somebody that is so comprised in a business way where they're willing to do every single promotion that comes up. It's humiliating at this point what they ask you to do. We can't stomach it. We don't get on radio because at some point we say, "We're not going to play the stupid Christmas show with 500 bands that aren't anything like us where the


audience basically hates us and we're not going to play the picnic with the chicken baskets." And when we started saying no, it was kind of like, all of the sudden, no more radio play for Indigo Girls. It's not based on music. Even if they love you, it's like they love 10 other people who are willing to do anything. Some of these bands, I can't believe what they'll do.

#### And for women, that especially means sexing up to an almost cartoonish dimension.

Yeah, unfortunately. I think if you want to do that, it's okay. I feel really strongly about a woman doing what she wants to do. Madonna's huge because of her image and the way she works the media and that's her own right. But at some point you think, god they're not going to play the overweight Hüsker Dü-looking woman band, it ain't gonna happen. [laughs] Or the woman in the wheelchair. I mean there's not a woman John Popper.

#### Will the Indigo Girls ever become a Daemon band?

The Indigo Girls will never be on Daemon because it's too weighted on my side. But we might do something indie. We don't really know what we want to do after we finish this deal. But I know that Daemon is something I understand better. I'd like the label to grow, but I'm not interested in having a bunch of bands sell 100,000 records. I want to have bands that need an opportunity and need a label to sell 5,000 copies and that's okay. That's what I want to be. ©



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**I**t smells like shit in Olympia, Washington. The pervasive odor grows stronger as I drive out into the countryside. Later, I'll blame it on the chickens.

Pulling off a desolate highway onto a gravel road, I think about the sleepy directions Unwound lead singer/guitarist Justin Trosper gave me just minutes ago. "What's your address?" I had asked.

"My address? I don't . . . I'm not really sure. It might be 8529," he had responded wearily.

Driving up and down the winding gravel road like riding waves, I understand, with only two houses barely in sight among a sea of weedy grass, why an address out here is irrelevant. "The big white two-story house on the left," Trosper had said.

The small rocks crackle beneath my tires as I make a sharp left turn into the driveway. It's difficult to see the house, shrouded by tall trees, in its entirety. The front door is open wide. The house—striped by shade on a partly cloudy, unusually humid day—looks abandoned. Brushing his shaggy, light-brown hair from his pale, somewhat dazed face, Trosper emerges from the basement, greets me, shakes my hand.

As Trosper—tall and slender, attired in a zip-up navy blue hoody and black pants that have both seen better days—prepares tea, I drag my feet about the house; it seems like no one lives here. There's little decoration or furniture. The '70s-style, carpeted living room—a half-lit staircase with iron railings at one end—is long and narrow. It's a big, nearly empty room—two non-matching secondhand sofas are the only furniture. A framed poster leans against the wall waiting to be hung.

Just off the kitchen, where remnants of this morning's breakfast are scattered about the counter tops, is an old kitchen table with a fish tank—mildewing and filled with gunk. A silver, velvety cat meows at me. Through the windowed back door I see a barbecue, where I envision Unwound and their friends gathering, chatting and laughing at summertime parties.

But inside the house it feels abandoned, cold. Mostly, things seem oddly or carelessly placed, as if no one hangs out in these rooms long enough to care.

Later, I'll know why. And I'll blame it on the basement—Unwound's practice space and studio, which they call MagRecOne.

Could be all the movies Trosper's

watched. Could be the maturity Unwound—Trosper, bassist Vern Rumsey and drummer Sara Lund, all 28—gained over the decade they've been together. But I can't help thinking it's the surreal-feeling house and the isolation of the Olympia countryside that accounts for the evolution of Unwound's sound from distorted punk-rock to the full-fledged but non-abstract art-rock found on *Leaves Turn Inside You*. Trosper calls the epic two-CD set, released earlier this year, "an obvious shift but a natural progression."

To "up the ante" onstage, Unwound have added a second guitarist (David Scott Stone, who most recently spent a year and a half as the Melvins' second guitarist) and a keyboardist (former Unwound drummer Brandt Sandeno) for touring purposes only. "I want there to be a noticeable difference at our live shows, to keep people interested," says Trosper.

Tossing a few blueberries in our mouths, chatting about the garden's bounty and glancing in the hen house, we drag together a few plastic chairs, squint beneath the bright white sky and, with chickens clucking at our feet ("We eat a lot of eggs," says Trosper), begin the conversation that will leave me with just two unan-

# UNWOUND

**S**ara Lund is the drummer for Unwound. Simply put, she is phenomenal and a huge presence live. As a woman and a drummer, she inspires me.

Interview by **Katy Otto**

**I am fascinated by your band because you have such a large body of work that is so diverse. I wanted to know how you first got involved in playing with Unwound—I know Vern and Justin were playing together before.**

I grew up in a different place from Justin and Vern. They grew up in Washington. I grew up in Indiana and started playing when I was 11. I started taking piano



swerable questions: "What does define art?" and "Why does it smell like shit in Olympia?"

After I interview Trosper and Jim photographs the group, we all head downstairs and Unwound—smoking cigarettes and drinking Budweiser—proceed to rehearse with new guitarist Stone for the first time while I bundle up in my sweater and wonder if all their gear is safe down here.

Interview by **Jenny Tatone**

### **What do you feel gives music its power?**

Besides playing the actual instruments, it's really intangible. The actual thing that happens, you can't touch or see. Sound keeps going until it hits something. Music is the most immediately emotional art. You can just be sitting there in a catatonic state. Sound is even physical, especially loud music. I guess that's why people go see live bands.

Artists seem to be driven by particular forces and emotions—whether it's politics or a broken heart. Is there something specific that drives and inspires you to make music?

Not specifically. Everyday life, I guess. I'll intellectualize things a lot, try to challenge myself, more than any emotional aspects, really.

### **So it's more making the music itself, rather than the subject, that drives you?**

Yeah, the process. I like to play, work out things, try to figure out how to record. It kind of just stems from that, like "Oh, this is going into this territory," mood wise, and the lyrics always come after, at the end of the process. The lyrics always have to fit into the musical puzzle. We write all the songs, and then the singing part just kind of fits in. The stuff I write is pretty confining so, yeah, I usually come up with song titles first and go from there. Sometimes the songs make sense and sometimes they don't. I don't usually go for a subject, just word play.

Do you feel like there was a point where your band crossed a line into suddenly feeling like "We're not just playing around anymore—people are starting to pay attention"?

We played in a lot of different bands in

high school, but when we started Unwound we decided we were gonna try to tour. We broke out pretty quick, but it took a few years before people would show up at shows—I would say until '95.

### **How did you react to that?**

We tried to tour as much as possible, to keep the ball rolling. We probably got burnt out; you kind of lose perspective. It took us a while to put out a new record. It took a certain amount of time to get back our perspective. Now everything feels really fresh again. I'm all excited about playing shows and writing new material.

### **How did *Leaves Turn Inside You* come together?**

We recorded it ourselves here in the basement—that was the major change. We decided to record it at home, so that changed the whole process, as opposed to having everything ready and jumping into the studio. There was a lot more space to write things. A lot of the songs were basically written the same as before, but we had more time to think about it and develop them in production. That's one



lessons, and then I started the drums in seventh grade in the school band. When I was a sophomore a drum set appeared in my house. The idea was that my parents wanted to see if I would take to it, if I would play on it. I started playing with my friends. I didn't know what I was doing. I played with a couple of bands. The thing in Bloomington with playing music was

that it was really supportive, because people were excited that I was playing drums, rocking out—there weren't many kids my age, but especially there weren't many girls. ¶ I ended up moving to Olympia when I was 18 and saw Unwound play one of the very first days I moved there. I was actually friends with Brandt, their first drummer. When he left there was talk of

me joining and I thought, "I could join that band." The arrangement of our first getting together was discussed by people acting as agents in a way. Slim who runs Kill Rock Stars and his girlfriend at the time were good friends of mine. I didn't know Justin and Vern very well. And I think what they said about me was, "Well, you know she's the heaviest drummer in



of the big differences with this record.

When I've listened to the album, I get this really moody feel, like it could almost be a soundtrack.

Yeah, I'm definitely influenced by soundtracks. I was thinking a lot about movies when we were making that record, trying to get that epic scope into it. Having that much time was good, to allow [time] to think about how the songs were gonna fit, how to produce them. Some of them were like, "Oh yeah, those ones *have* to go together." A lot of them fit together like that; kinda like how people who do movies shape a scene here and then put a song in sequence there. It worked out like that because there's a lot of different little moods to try to fit together. So that was cool, as opposed to having a series of just rock songs. We could tone down some of them by making them washier and more heady.

Were there any specific movies you were thinking about?

One that sticks out that had a big effect on me last year was *Pola X*. That was a melodramatic movie. I was just like, "Wow!" It's not realistic, not based in reality at all; it's totally out there. It's not even psychedelic,

it's not goofy, you're just like, "I can't believe this is happening now," over and over! And then all of a sudden something out-of-the-blue, insane, happened. I thought that was a really inspiring movie in the artistic overtones. All the movies I've seen by Leos Carax just blow me away.

How has playing together for as long as Unwound has changed the way you approach the band or your music?

We've been playing together for so long and are getting older. I feel a lot more confident realizing how to focus. Before, I was focused on a whole different level, but not confident—a certain amount of confidence with a little arrogance. [laughs] Initially, it was learning how to play music—and to some degree it's still that way. I still feel the need to practice. I've gone through a super lazy period: "Oh, I'm fine, just strum. I know a couple chords." Now I'm in a space where I actually *want* to increase my actual physical playing ability; being able to feel at ease when I'm playing in front of people and being able to translate music; having the songwriting translate better.

That kind of goes along with the whole evolution too, just slowly progressing into having it become second nature.

Yeah. The better you get at an instrument, or learning how to write songs, really makes a huge difference. I think our earlier stuff was based on energy and song structure—we had this energy level that was more about trying to create natural dynamics.

Then are you eager to play live?

Yeah, we're adding a second guitar player, David Scott Stone, for the next tour, so we're all eager to see that.

Is it frustrating that Kill Rock Stars doesn't have the ability to make the whole world aware of *Leaves Turn Inside You*? It seems that millions of rock fans would love the album if they just knew about it.

I don't know. You can't blame it all on the label. A lot of it has to do with timing and luck. A lot of people have heard our name but have never heard our music. People that are into music are like, "Oh yeah, I've heard that name before. I've heard this is what they do." In one way that works against us. I think there's probably a whole generation of people born in the '80s that



town." And so we got together and it just went really well. It wasn't like we got together and played Unwound songs. We played new stuff. I thought it went well, so I went home and waited to hear from them, and they said, "Well, you can join if you want."

That sounds like guys.

I was like, "Yeah, OK!" It was good.

How many years ago was that?

Nine years ago this summer. July of '92.

I started playing drums when I was 17. Immediately all my friends who were indie/punk rock boys started buying me Unwound records and saying, "You've got to listen to this!" I had never seen a woman

play drums at that point. The first time I saw you play, you walked out and dropped a big cement brick in front of your bass drum, and I said to myself, "This looks good to me—worth my six bucks!" It was an awesome show. How do you think you fit into the Kill Rock Stars culture—a label with such a strong female presence—as a band?

That's interesting because I'm not really



might like it. ¶ Our whole thing from the beginning was that we're not gonna try to rely on getting in magazines, hyping ourselves. We're just gonna bring ourselves around live. I think the albums could probably be distributed better. But it's really just luck. I mean, Sleater-Kinney are on the same label and they're huge. It has something to do with the accessibility of the music, but timing is a lot of it too. ¶ We're at a good level that a lot of bands aren't ever gonna achieve—for better or worse, really. You can get so much recognition that it works *against* you, but on the other hand some people really feed off that kind of fame.

What do you think makes a band last, as opposed to being a flash in the pan? Like, you can be big for just a second, or you can be big forever. Do you think certain qualities determine that?

Yeah. The basis of any band that keeps it together is, "We're not gonna worry so much about having a lot of attention." We decided early on that if we play in basements all the time, that's fine and we'll see where it goes from there. That's how we did it; going on tours until we built inter-

est slowly, semi-professionally. Keeping a strong basis musically first and not worrying about the other stuff too much. It goes with the times too. ¶ When *Repetition* came out in 1996, that was probably the biggest year. Tons of people were always going to shows, which was sort of that culmination of the early '90s peak. Then a lot of people moved out of music. Now it's at a point where a lot of people are experimenting with different genres of music again. It's come back full circle. It's starting to feel a little more like it did in the early '90s, except not as overblown.

Over the years it seems what it means to be independent has gone from simply working independently as an artist, free from contract restrictions, to classifying an entire sound, look and style. Ironically, it's become a mentality to capitalize on. How have these sorts of changes affected you, if at all, and what does it mean to you to be independent now?

Being independent goes beyond major labels vs. indie labels. That's been the wrong focus for too long. I don't think it matters, politically. But a lot of people that are in bands use the, "Yeah we're independent until something better comes along." And they're not

thinking in terms of making their art.

They're thinking in terms of success. I think there are people that have gone to a major label and were not thinking in terms of success and it's worked out fine for them; they still remain independent as artists in their heads. It's more like a lifestyle: You don't wait for things to happen to you, you just do it yourself until someone else can help you do it better than you can, and use your abilities to the best you can. And, of course, go to the commune and buy organic [laughs]. ¶ I think, for a lot of people, what you buy defines them. It's consumer culture. People feel better about themselves if they buy organic orange juice instead of Minute Maid—that pacifies people. They don't have to be actively political, just have to buy the right products: "I buy organic. I buy independent labels. I'm consuming the right things." That's the argument behind people saying, "Well, we're consuming the right things. We're supporting the right businesses." ¶ When you get down to making art, it really goes beyond that. That's not really part of the creative process. That's part of consumerism. It doesn't really matter who's behind what you're doing because there's all sorts of hypocrisies—that's part of life. A lot of people get to that level and they



yourself until someone else can help you do it better than you can, and use your abilities to the best you can.

sure how well we fit into it, except that we all come from the same area and it's an isolated little pocket in many ways out here. Olympia in particular is an incredibly small town. Everyone knows each other. Riot Girl was something that was just going on than something I was a part of. Sometimes it was a little extreme; there was backlash and a strange sentiment

around town, and tension among those involved in Riot Girl and those not involved. In terms of Unwound's role, we're the first rock band that Kill Rock Stars put out. We're part of a label and bands that have grown up together. We're one of the bands that is the least involved with the label in that we don't call every day trying to figure out what is going on

with this, that and the other. We have a quiet respect for each other—we know that we are important to them and they know that they are important to us.

That sounds very healthy. How are you able to maintain such energy and such a commitment to work with each other over a long period of time? Is it ever challenging?



can't handle it, and it ruins their band because they don't have a strong basis. Even pretty good bands, when they switched over to majors, they got all this money and disputed over so many different things. Signing to a major label is sort of a test for certain people: "Are they really a good band or not? Is money going to ruin this band?" It will if they don't have a strong basis for the band. So they shouldn't have signed to a major. They should've practiced more or gotten their egos taken care of first. ¶ We're all artists, and we're all egocentric, and there's constant chaos with other artists. Focus your egocentrism into collaborating with others. The beauty of it is when that happens, people are letting the music happen.

**So, if Unwound was presented with the opportunity to sign to a major, would you?**

I don't know at this point. Money . . . everybody wants money. But we do all right. We don't work ourselves to death with day jobs too much. I think the whole major thing would change us a lot. A lot of people got the big advances and didn't have to put out the record. We actually had a publishing deal five years ago; we got a chunk of money but we actually never did anything for it. We

were trying to figure out a way like, "How can we get some of this money floating around?" Some people survive that chunk of money and some people saw it destroy their bands. A lot of people are getting songs in commercials. A lot of really bizarre things have happened in the last few years. And it still gets weirder.

**We've already talked about this a little, but just to get a little more specific: at some point in your life you've wondered what it would feel like to become a huge band that ends up becoming a legend. Is that ever a goal or a dream now?**

No. Being in a band for so long, when you get older, you get more realistic. I don't really care too much. I think, personally, I would rather be exposed to new things, try to go to new places with the band . . . What happens, happens. I'd actually rather make more money than be famous [laughs]. I feel like we've had a lot of respect, and it's great.

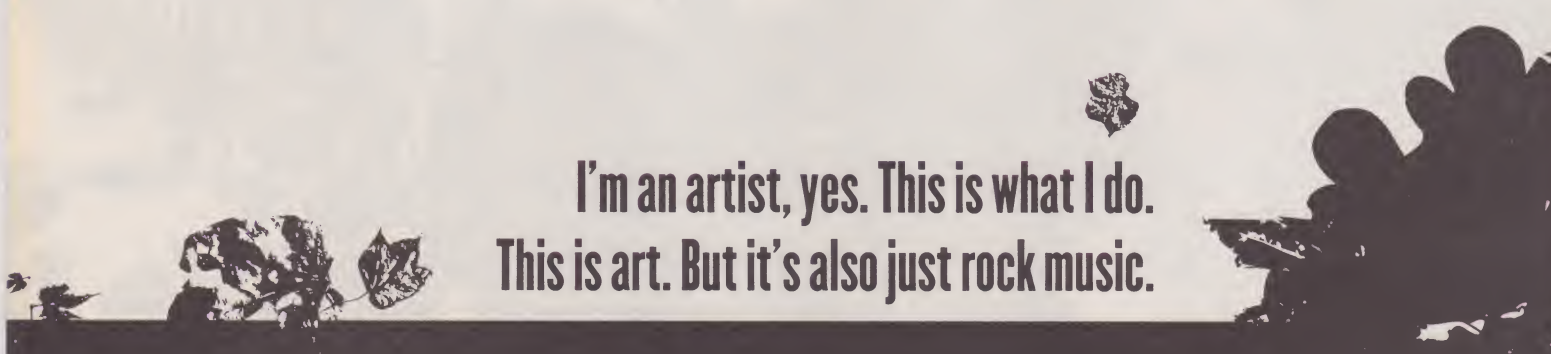
**I feel when you choose to put yourself in a band and work toward living off of that choice, you also inadvertently choose to live in a public space, where you are heard, watched and examined. Many have never**

**experienced this. Could you talk about what it feels like?**

I guess being around band people for so long—creating our own little world—that's always been a part of my life. I never went through that transition of having a full-time job to all of a sudden, "The band's doing really well, let's quit our jobs!" From day one, I was like, "How can I avoid working? Hmmm . . ." [laughs]. Living here all my life, seeing the same faces, it's hard to get outside that idea. ¶ I guess people judge you a little harder if you're in the public space. Say, if a random drunk person falls on the sidewalk and it's a bum, you're like, "Oh it's a bum," and then you see somebody famous fall on the sidewalk, you're like, "Hey look! Robert Downey Jr. just got arrested again!" Somehow it's more interesting. But we don't really have to worry about it. In this town, no one really cares who we are—we're part of the landscape. People that are super famous, people that are always in that sphere, no wonder they're all fucked up on drugs.

**As a musician, what has brought you the most satisfaction and happiness?**

Different moments . . . highlights from traveling, touring, things like that along



**I'm an artist, yes. This is what I do.  
This is art. But it's also just rock music.**

It is challenging, but I think we're too lazy to quit! [laughs] It's going to be amazing on the day when one of us has the balls to finally say they don't want to do it. The balls or . . . whatever. It's going to be hard. The three of us have essentially grown up together. We've become close and gone through a lot but it's also been important to maintain a certain level of

professional distance I think. We try to keep conflict away from the band. We're close friends but in a lot of ways it's kind of superficial because we are trying to be careful with one another. There are definite boundaries that are up. And it's weird because as a girl that is not a natural way to relate to people, and I know that in the long run it's affected the rest of my life. I

spend a lot of time on tour trying to make them remember that I am a girl.

**When I traveled with my old band, we were two men and two women, and we would travel with bands of all men that would say, "You all are so weird, you make sure each other has eaten and you don't all rush for the bed, you check whose turn it is . . ." They thought we were too touchy feely that way,**



the way. It's a long list. And being a record collector for so long, being able to put out records—being *in* the process.

**What's the most frustrating and difficult?**

Keeping everything together as far as trying to get things done. Being an idea person and being blocked, which I definitely got over early on. I wasn't willing to fail, and now I'm *totally* willing to fail. I know a lot of people that are really creative but have all these psychological blocks where they're like, "If I do this, somebody will think that . . ." They have this idea, they write it out obsessively for months or years, and never get it done.

**Do you have time for other interests other than music?**

I do have time, but I just buy records and listen to music. Most of my hobbies revolve around absorbing other people's stuff, listening to different records. I don't mountain climb or kayak or anything like that. [laughs] I like cooking, hanging out with my friends, enjoying the fruits of other people's labors. [laughs]

**Many believe that writing—whether it be fiction, poems or songs—reveals the writer at**

**his or her utmost realness. That is to say, to be a writer means to be as honest with yourself and the world as you possibly can be, and it exposes the writer to sometimes-harsh realities. As the saying goes, the truth hurts. Is it ever hard to write songs? Can it be painful?**

Yeah. But there's buffer zones that you find in fictional subjects. I like writing. I like to be real on some level; I like to expose myself, looking back and finding that level of being honest, or digging out the garbage inside of you.

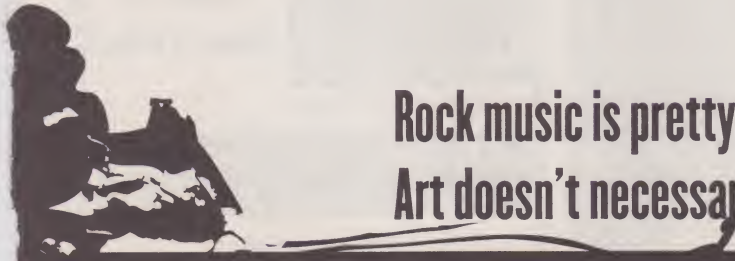
**Do you think the fact that you've written as an artist for so many years has kind of shaped the way your life has become? Like, if you had never written as much as you have, you wouldn't be as consciously aware of your life?**

Definitely not. I don't know where I'd be without writing. It's so much a part of my normal life, I couldn't imagine not writing.

**Do you think of the music you make as being art?**

I have a pretty broad idea of art. I think a lot of artists interpret things differently. Some people feel empowered by art. But, then again, I don't walk into a craft store and look at ducks made out of twigs and

consider it art. I mean, on some level, what's the difference between that and a Picasso? I guess the medium that we use is rock and at some point in time came *art* rock. I think what's more important is enjoying the creative process and then letting other people decide. To me, it is art. But I could see someone disagreeing with that. There's definitely a craft involved in the process, just the same as other art. It's the same as translating what goes on inside your brain onto canvas or paper. I'm an artist, yes. This is what I do. This is art. But it's also just rock music. Rock music is pretty easy to understand. Art doesn't necessarily have to be hard to understand. Vision is key: that's the difference between a band like us and a cover band. A cover band is sort of a copy machine. You take a piece of art and you copy it off. Anything, like an art book, you can look at it there or you can see a piece of art on the wall—is *that* the art or is *this* the art? How diluted is art? Is art just the thing when it happens, or is it like when it's finished? ¶ Maybe the highest point to experience us would be live, on a good night, not on a bad night. Is a bad night art? I don't know. I hope people forget the bad nights. [laughs] ©



**Rock music is pretty easy to understand.  
Art doesn't necessarily have to be hard to understand.**

**and I can see the value in maybe trying to keep some boundaries up in terms of personal stuff as well.**

There's that but then there is also that we have been together for nine years, almost like a marriage. And we know a lot about each other. I don't know everything about them, but I know what kind of people they are and I know what

they think and how they are going to react to situations. We did some intense touring for several years and then for the last two or three years we've hardly done any touring at all. We were wondering if we would be any more respectful than we initially were in how we treated each other in recent trips out. There was a friend traveling with us

remarking on how respectful we were towards each other. We do check on each other, although maybe it was because it was a short tour and we were all excited because we hadn't gone in so long. We went out longer in September, 2001. We took a really long break and it made me realize how important it is for me to tour. I like it. ©



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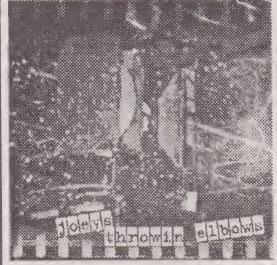
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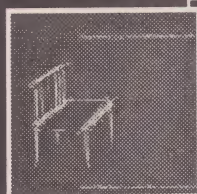
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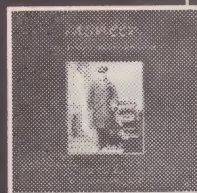


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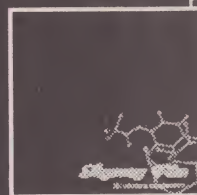
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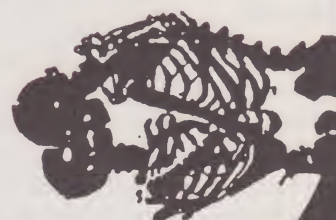
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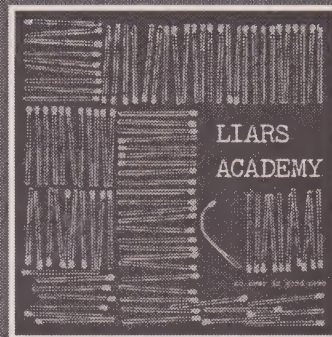


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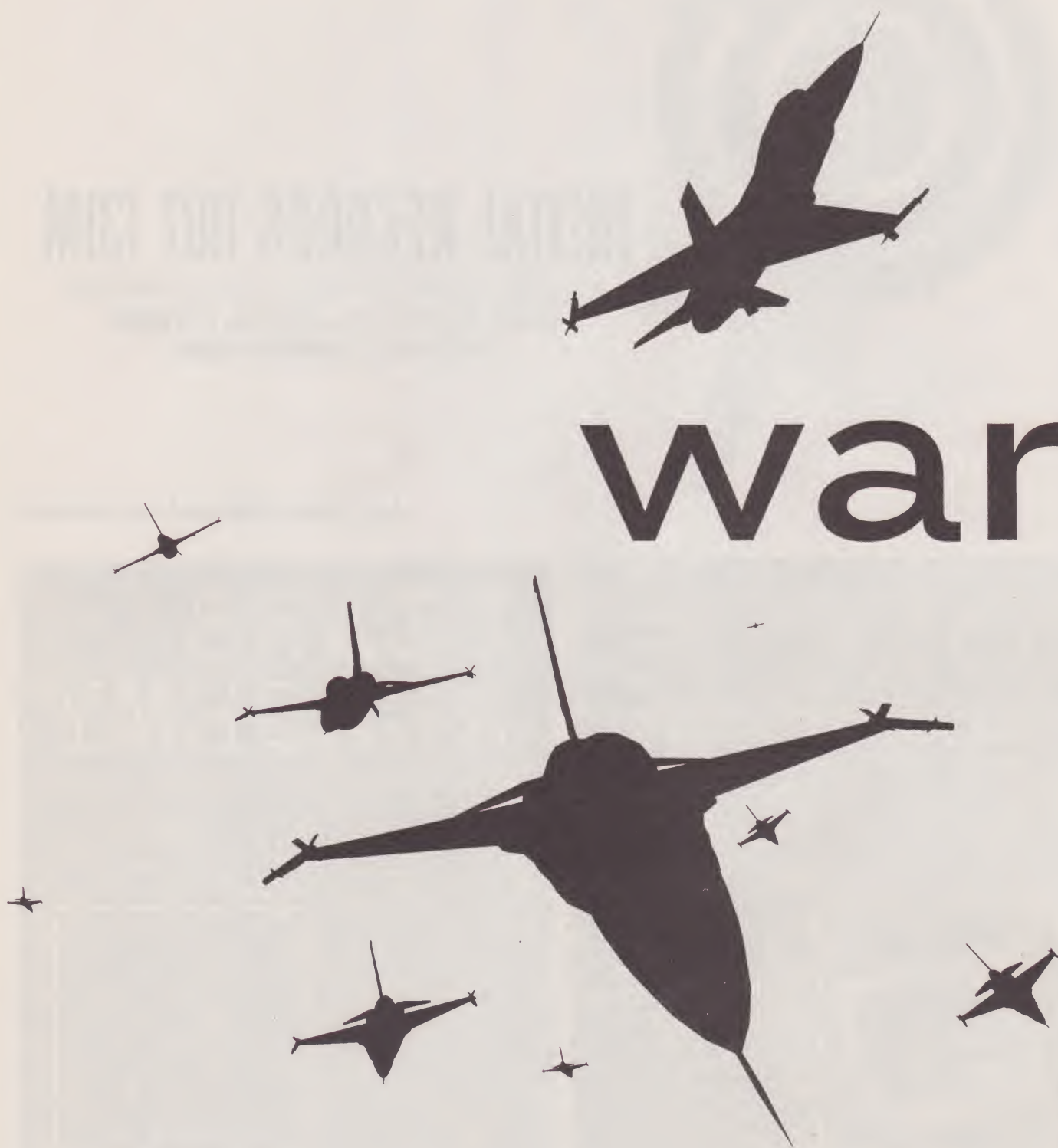


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# war





# songs

## in 10 verses

I keep waiting to wake up. The alarm will go off and it will be September 11th. I will have slept in, it'll be sunny outside, and nothing will have happened—no planes were hijacked, no buildings fell down. Life will be just as it was when we all went to bed on September 10th, no talk of patriotism or “new” wars. But I don’t wake up to this. None of us do.

For those of us privileged enough to live in the US, we wake up every day to reports of “heightened alerts”, of anthrax attacks, and of battlefield “successes.” For others, they wake to the sounds of US bombs. But I think all of us wake up confused and concerned. I know I do.

“War Songs” is not meant to be an answer to your confusion, or to quell your concern. Instead, it’s meant to be 10 different ways of looking at the current “war against terror.” Some of the verses deal directly with the military conflict, others approach it more tangentially. Some are interviews, others articles and essays. Each deals with a different facet of the complicated situation both at home and abroad.

There isn’t one simple answer to what happened on September 11th and what continues to happen today as a result. To claim otherwise would be both foolish and misleading. Equally foolish would be to claim that this is the only information you need to understand this conflict. This is only the tip of the iceberg; a starting point. There are a number of news sources listed in the See Also section of this issue that you can turn to in order to read more analysis like you’ll find in “War Songs”

We can all pretend to still be asleep, pretend like this never happened—like this *isn’t* happening. But that doesn’t make it so. To waking, understanding and peace we sing.

Introduction by **Daniel Sinker**



"What, exactly, was our government attempting to accomplish by distributing sacks of cash and anti-aircraft missiles to Afghan fundamentalists?" —verse one

## verse one Which Side Are We On?

by JC Myers

**T**he war, such as it is, has been good for President Bush. Of course, any president lives for the chance to play Commander-in-Chief, but for Bush, this war has been a special gift: it has made him almost articulate. In a painfully obvious effort to capture the gravity of the moment, the tempo of his public statements has slowed until even he can manage to make sense of what his speech writers and spin doctors have scripted for him. But while his grammar and phrasing are clearer than ever, his grasp of politics and history could still use some polishing.

In a recent speech transmitted by satellite to government officials in Eastern Europe, Bush compared the contemporary forces of fundamentalist Islam to "the fascist totalitarians before them." Having identified Eastern Europe as the area of the world that had suffered under these repressive ideologies "for more than 50 years," we can only presume that he meant to refer to communism here rather than fascism. No matter—everyone knows that communism and fascism were just different flavors of totalitarianism anyway. Both shared "the same intolerance of dissent, the same mad global ambitions, the same brutal determination to control every life and all of life." Like their "fascist totalitarian" ancestors, Bush intoned, the Taliban had imprisoned women in their homes and banned children from flying kites. He might have added that of late they had also required all non-Muslims in Afghanistan to wear Nazi-style identity badges in public, but then again, he might also have added that up until September 11, all of this and more was perfectly acceptable to the administration in Washington. At the very least, the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan without so much as an unkind word from the State Department. More damningly, as some commentators have suggested, the US government winked and smiled and kept the arms and money flowing while Pakistan's secret service worked on the ground to deliver Kabul to Mullah Omar and his Merry Men.

It would not be the first time our government had sided with the fundamentalists. In the 1980s, American arms and money went to the Mujahedeen (including one Osama bin Laden) battling what was billed as—and what nearly all of us now reflexively refer to as—the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Here was a prime example of "fascist totalitarianism" in action: a ruthless super-power attempting to bring a proud and independent people under the boot-heel in pursuit of its mad global ambitions. It was a thrilling tale of freedom-loving desert-dwellers fighting back the Red Menace; rifle-toting horsemen holding off Big Brother just as 1984 rolled around on the calendar. Yes, it was a good

story and like so many other stories we were told during the Cold War, not a bit of it was true. Even while the conflict was going on, anyone who cared enough to glance at the historical record could have learned that the USSR sent its armed forces into Afghanistan to support a sitting government rather than to overthrow one. In that sense, the Soviet action in Afghanistan was no different from the American actions in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador: the bolstering of an allied government against a domestic insurgency.

The USSR might still have been criticized for sticking its tanks into the internal affairs of a country whose people should have been allowed to choose their own fate, but even this version of the story fails to stand up to scrutiny. In an interview published in the French *Le Nouvel Observateur* in 1998, former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski finally revealed that US aid to the insurgents in Afghanistan began on July 3 1979—a full six months before the first Soviet soldier had crossed the border. "And that very day," Brzezinski went on to say, "I wrote a note to the President in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention."

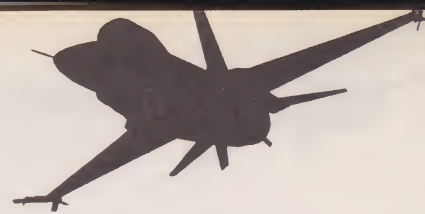
The Soviets went for the bait and bled themselves dry fighting one of our government's many proxy armies. Afghanistan became an anarchic nightmare of ethnic warlordism, out of which the Taliban emerged to impose their version of ultra-orthodox sharia law. Bin Laden and his multinational jihadi organization settled in for the long haul.

What, exactly, was our government attempting to accomplish by distributing sacks of cash and anti-aircraft missiles to Afghan fundamentalists? According to Brzezinski, the US was helping to speed the downfall of communism, and the program's success in this respect is undeniable. But it also resulted in the overthrow of a secular government that brought women into public life, professional careers, and government service, cancelled peasant debt, introduced land reform, and broadened ordinary Afghans' access to health care and education.

Those who backed our government's tireless pursuit of the Cold War would no doubt claim that the anti-communist crusade was carried out in the interest of human rights, the closing of the gulag, and the opening of the iron curtain, but this would be the worst kind of hypocrisy. Now that China has opened its economy to international investors, just how loudly does anyone in Washington cry about its human rights violations? Who in the Bush administration has ever asked about the standard of living for an average Russian these days? Judging by their actions rather than their words, all the American Cold Warriors ever really wanted was a Pizza Hut in Moscow and a Nike factory in Hanoi.

In a statement released to most of the world on November third 2001, but available to people in the US only by way of foreign Internet sites, Osama bin Laden made the case that the cur-





rent conflict in Afghanistan was one pitting the loyal Muslims of the East against the atheist and infidel Crusaders of the West. For his part, President Bush has made an effort to downplay a religious interpretation of the war, arguing that law-abiding states and lawless terrorists make up the identities of the two sides. Neither version of the story, however, squares with the historical facts.

Had the fundamentalists never attacked an American target, they would have retained their status as convenient, if occasionally embarrassing, friends of the State Department. And had the US done anything other than to aid in perpetuating the grinding poverty and intolerable inequality with which most of the world lives each day, the hatred and resentment fueling the fires of fundamentalism would never have found a home. This is not a war between Christians and Muslims or lawmen and terrorists—it is a war between religious fundamentalists and market fundamentalists, driven into battle with one another by nothing so much as their mutual stubbornness and irrationality. Bush and bin Laden both claim that this is a war dividing the world into two sides, but this too is wrong. There are also those few of us left for whom neither side's vision of the future is an acceptable one.

## verse two

# Blowback: an interview with David Gibbs

by Joel Schalit

**D**avid Gibbs, a professor of Political Science at the University of Arizona in Tucson, has been following Afghanistan for well over 15 years. Beginning with the essay "The Peasant as Counterrevolutionary: The Rural Origins of the Afghan Insurgency," Gibbs has made a concerted effort to understand why the outside world has taken such a strong interest in this violent, landlocked country. I spoke to Gibbs about his opinions on the war, its origins, and its significance. What transpired was a fascinating conversation, as disturbing as it was informative.

**To what extent do you give credence to the notion that has been put forth by conservative pundits such as the *New York Times*' Andrew Sullivan that this is indeed a clash of civilizations, in particular, a war of religions?**

The problem with that thesis is that the clash of civilizations is a very convenient cliché with which to encapsulate this conflict. I think

there's a need for very convenient clichés here, the other one being Pearl Harbor. More importantly, I think that this is an easy explanation that lets America off the hook in the sense that it suggests that this is inevitable, that there is inevitability about this conflict. Hence, there's nothing the US has done that could have provoked this. ¶ In terms of provocation, let me state quite clearly that September 11 was an act of mass murder. There's no question about it. And there's no reasonable provocation that could possibly justify such an act. Nevertheless, it must be said that it took place in a context in which people in the Middle East and people outside of the Middle East feel as though the US had made an extended series of provocations against Muslim peoples. It's very easy to look at American foreign policy and see precise instances of provocation. Basically, the clash of civilizations interpretations that we're getting are convenient efforts to whitewash those provocations. ¶ More importantly, there's the problem of "blowback," popularized very well and very effectively by Chalmers Johnson in his excellent book *Blowback*, which was published before these attacks. The point he was making is that US foreign policy is justified to protect the national security of the United States. The irony is that by undertaking provocative actions, it creates situations that basically guarantee a backlash and undercut US security in any meaningful sense of the term. In the case of Osama Bin Laden, you have a very dramatic case of blowback. ¶ According to *Le Monde*, Bin Laden was recruited by the CIA in 1979. He was clearly a US ally, working for 10 years on the same side as the United States. He worked specifically with Gulbadin Hekmatyar, who was the most favored Mujahedin commander during this period. The *New York Times* mentions that he may very well be in a cave right now that was reinforced with assistance by the CIA during the 1980s. One really has to ask about the wisdom of US policies that work to create and further monsters like Osama Bin Laden.

**What do you think accounts for the alleged transition in Bin Laden's thinking about the United States after having previously been a client-guerrilla?**

The US had a function for Bin Laden, which was to help him fight communism. In the process of doing so, the US backed a series of extremely unsavory characters of which Bin Laden and Hekmatyar are only two examples. By Bin Laden's account, what transformed him was the stationing of US forces in Saudi Arabia, which offended him religiously as well as on nationalist grounds. That's one more feature—an outgrowth of the Gulf War—that represented blowback. The stationing of US forces in Saudi Arabia led to a legacy of bitterness and backlash against the United States. It's worth mentioning that a majority of the hijackers on September 11 were Saudi citizens.

**There were also a number of Egyptians amongst the hijackers.**





That's also important to note. Egypt is a country that receives a large amount of US aid. There's no question that there's a backlash against a perception of American arrogance and heavy-handedness. One obviously has to add US support for Israel at a time of uprising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. ¶ In general, the Gulf War was seen by Arabs as a very ugly war, even though many Arabs participated in it. At best, their participation was of two minds. Particularly in the aftermath of the war, I think there was a great deal of bitterness that nearly all the casualties in that war were Arab, and almost none were American. ¶ There was also a lot of bitterness that the US had encouraged uprisings against Saddam Hussein by the Shi'ites in the south and the Kurds in the north and the US then indirectly facilitated the crushing of those rebellions. One could go on and on: there was the 1953 coup against the government of Mossadegh in Iran, and the building up of the Shah, which most Iranians will probably never forgive the US for. So one really has to see a pattern of provocation here that is a critical factor in understanding the psychological dynamics that would lead to terrorist acts against the United States.

**What do you think the biggest lesson to learn from the war in Afghanistan is?**

I would say that the corruption of the human rights discourse is the main lesson I would take from it. In the 1960s and 1970s, human rights discourse initially had a very progressive character. In principle, of course, it's still a great idea. The problem with it now is that to a large extent, the rhetoric has been adopted by official United States foreign policy. Virtually everything the US has done in the last 10 years has been justified as a war for human rights. Of course, military action is a very poor way to achieve human rights objectives, even if you're fighting against evil governments. We can see that most dramatically in Afghanistan, where the war has created a huge humanitarian crisis because it's generated such vast numbers of refugees. If we're trying to achieve a humanitarian objective, this is an extremely poor way to do it. ¶ It's worth noting that there's been a transformation here that's not been fully grasped. When human rights activists talked about the need for action to be taken against, for example, Chile when it was under Pinochet or against South Africa during the days of Apartheid, nobody talked about bombing. That simply wasn't something that anybody advocated. No leftist said that somebody should bomb Chile to get Pinochet out of power. It's quite remarkable how there's been a change of thinking here.

**What do you think Afghanistan's economic significance is to the West.**

I'm not fully persuaded that this is a war for oil. But there's definitely an oil angle to this. In the Caspian Sea region, there's unquestionably vast oil interests. There's a great deal of US interest in this region, particularly in the Central Asian republics such

as Uzbekistan, which has considerable gas reserves. The basic problem is this: Central Asian republics around the Caspian are very far inland and very far from the open ocean. So there's a need for a pipeline. Thus we have a longstanding US and oil company interest in the region, and the building of an oil pipeline traversing Afghanistan in order to bring Central Asian oil and gas to the Indian Ocean. The US has probably wanted a military presence in Central Asia for a while—something they have now achieved with permanent bases in Uzbekistan and possibly Tajikistan. This has offered the US an opportunity to do something that it had wanted to do anyway for geo-strategic as well as business reasons. ¶ However, my inclination is to think that oil interests were secondary and that the war in Afghanistan was primarily triggered by the terrorist incident in New York. Nevertheless, it fortuitously offered American foreign policy opportunity to secure geo-strategic and natural resource interests in Central Asia that might not otherwise have been possible. I think of equal importance is the military-industrial complex's stake in this war.

**What do you mean?**

Foreign policy elites, both military and civilian, really miss the Cold War in terms of how it served as a vital legitimization function for American hegemony. The Cold War legitimized US dominance over capitalist allies, notably Europe and Japan, who otherwise would have chafed at US dominance. It legitimated very high levels of military expenditure, and it legitimated overseas adventures. The absence of that legitimating factor has been a very serious problem from the standpoint of the military-industrial complex in terms of justifying itself. I think there's been a longstanding effort to find some kind of substitute for communism, and they never really came up with very much until September 11. They grasped at China, North Korea and Iraq as possibilities, humanitarian intervention as a possibility, but there was no single consistent theme that they could come up with that could really replace communism. ¶ It was feared that they really could not justify continued military expenditures. There was a severe contraction after 1989. It went down approximately 25 per cent in real spending over the next couple of years and stayed at approximately three-quarters of the level that it was at during the Cold War. Although as a percentage of the GDP, military expenditures sank considerably more to around three or three and a half percent of the gross domestic product. The Bush administration was elected with the expectation that it would augment spending. The problem was justifying it. ¶ There was also another problem, which was that since 1989, US allies have been far less restive and far less willing to accept US dictates, seeing the United States as increasingly a kind of predatory hegemon without any legitimating function. There were increasing signs of independence by the Europeans and the



**"Military action is a very poor way to achieve human rights objectives, even if you're fighting against evil governments. We can see that most dramatically in Afghanistan, where the war has created a huge humanitarian crisis because it's generated such vast numbers of refugees." —verse two**

Japanese that was very worrying to US officials. This also gave them additional incentive to find some kind of substitute for communism. The point is that the common enemy during the Cold War tended to suppress these latent tensions. All of these problems may be solved now that the US and the world has an enemy that has the kind of threatening character and the overarching plausibility that the threat of communism seemed to offer in an earlier era. This of course is fortuitous because of the benefits it will offer the military-industrial complex.

**And yet, in terms of it being an ideologically identifiable oppositional force to the capitalist West, fundamentalist Islam does not represent itself as a competing economic ideology of social justice in the same way that communism once did.**

Islam doesn't have the same kind of global appeal in that sense. Nevertheless, it does represent 2 billion or so people, which is clearly a significant part of the globe. Not just the Middle East, but Indonesia, Malaysia etc . . . Nevertheless its appeal is limited to Muslims and people considering conversion to Islam. In terms of its military threat, it's at least as menacing and scary as communism once was. So in that sense, Islam is a plausible enemy.

**Sure, it serves the same kind of psychological function.**

It does. Islam serves as an overarching threat. The problem with something like Iraq is that Iraq was confined to Iraq. Someone like Saddam Hussein did not really have that much appeal outside of Iraq. He did not represent a coherent ideology in the same sense. If you wanted to make Iraq the enemy of the US military-industrial complex, it seemed hopelessly implausible, whereas this seems more plausible. There was a wonderful quote by Colin Powell in 1990, in which he said "I'm running out of demons, I'm running out of villains." That encapsulates the basic dilemma that the US has faced during the past 10 years. It doesn't face that dilemma anymore.

## verse three With Friends Like These . . . by Jeff Guntzel

**T**he word "coalition" gets thrown around a lot these days by professional pundits and policy makers, but little attention aside from name recognition is paid to the countries that make up this coalition. The unflagging British journalist, Robert Fisk, writing just days into the bombing of Afghanistan, cautioned that as the architects of the "war against terror" scan the globe for

potential allies, "we are being asked to forget a lot of recent history." In fact, since September 11th, many Americans are behaving as if history began the moment the first tower was struck.

So just what kind of company are we keeping in this war? Here are some snapshots of these new (and old) friends:

### Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan, which became an independent state in 1991, has retained much of its Soviet legacy. It has no independent political parties, no free and fair elections, and no independent news media. Torture and police brutality are widespread. Most vulnerable are political dissidents and religious Muslims who worship outside state controls.

"President Bush has said the war on terrorism cannot become a war on Islam," says Tom Malinowski, Washington Advocacy Director of Human Rights Watch. "The government of Uzbekistan is undeniably at war with forms of Islam it does not control."

The government of Uzbekistan, led by President Islam Karimov, has waged a merciless four-year campaign against non-violent religious Muslims who practice their faith outside state controls. Citing the threat of "Islamic extremism," authorities have arrested, tortured, and convicted thousands of these independent Muslims: men who attended sermons of state religious leaders who later fell out of favor, men who prayed at home or in small private groups, and those who belonged to unregistered Islamic organizations or possessed religious literature not sanctioned by the state.

Few of the estimated 7,000 independent Muslims sitting in Uzbekistan's prisons today were accused of participation in any violent act, while thousands of peaceful Muslims were locked up for holding beliefs or worshiping in ways the state disapproves.

*Compiled from a Human Rights Watch news release, 10/4/01.*

### Saudi Arabia

Freedom of expression and association are nonexistent rights, political parties and independent local media are not permitted, and even peaceful anti-government activities remain virtually unthinkable in this longtime US ally. Infringements on privacy, institutionalized gender discrimination, harsh restrictions on the exercise of religious freedom, and the use of capital and corporal punishment are also major features of the kingdom's human rights record.

In 2000, capital punishment was applied for crimes including murder, rape, armed robbery, drug smuggling, sodomy, and sorcery. In most cases, the condemned were decapitated in public squares after being blindfolded, handcuffed, shackled at the ankles, and tranquilized. By late September 2000, at least 104 Saudis and foreigners had been beheaded, exceeding in nine months the total of 103 that Amnesty International recorded in 1999.



"The moral line splitting 'good' and 'evil' is not so clear after all. This is American Foreign Policy IOI: From Franco to Suharto, Pinochet to Hussein, US policy abroad has always been peppered with dubious relationships." —verse three

Saudi courts continue to impose corporal punishment, including amputations of hands and feet for robbery, and floggings for lesser crimes such as "sexual deviance" and drunkenness.

Saudi Arabia also continues to provide refuge and financial support to Idi Amin, the exiled Ugandan leader whose regime was responsible for a reign of terror that left an estimated 300,000 dead in the 1970s. After fleeing Uganda in 1979, Amin arrived in the kingdom at the invitation of the late King Faisal and reportedly has since been protected by government-paid Saudi guards. A journalist with Uganda's *New Vision* newspaper interviewed Amin in Jeddah in 1999 and reported that he had moved from his home in the city center "to a more exclusive area . . . mainly occupied by powerful oil sheikhs."

*Compiled from the Human Rights Watch World Report 2001*

### Russia

Russia has had a terrible record of human rights abuses in its ongoing battle with Chechnyan rebels. After taking Chechnya's capital Grozny in early February 2000, Russian troops exercised nominal control over most of the republic's territory. Rebel forces retreated into the mountains to fight a guerrilla war, staging surprise attacks on Russian positions and convoys and murdering Chechens working in the new pro-Russian administration. Both sides showed scant respect for international law, but the far larger force of Russian troops backed by air power and artillery committed the lion's share of violations.

The city of Grozny, bombed for three straight months, from November 1999 to early February 2000, was essentially treated as one enormous military target. Though the vast majority of civilians had left the city before the assault started, an estimated 20 to 40 thousand civilians, many too poor, sick, or infirm to leave, remained. These people were given little thought as the Russian military machine obliterated the city. The only hospital that functioned throughout these months—though heavily damaged—treated 5,600 people (including Chechen fighters) for injuries sustained from the bombing campaign; according to estimates this was only about half the total number of injured. Many thousands of civilians were believed to have died in Grozny alone.

*Compiled from the HRW World Report 2001.*

### Turkey

The Turkish government made almost no progress on key human rights reforms in 2000, and failed to take advantage of the opportunity presented by a marked reduction in armed violence by illegal organizations. This was in spite of the strong incentive coming from the European Union, which offered long-awaited recognition to Turkey as a candidate for membership, subject to its meeting human rights conditions. While the gov-

ernment procrastinated, politicians and writers were prosecuted and imprisoned for expressing their nonviolent opinions, and detainees in police custody remained at risk of ill-treatment, torture, or death in custody.

In recent years, reports by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and the UN special rapporteur on torture have confirmed the widespread nature of torture in Turkey. In May 2000, the Human Rights Commission of the Turkish Parliament issued six long and detailed reports documenting the persistence of torture. A seventh was published in October. Based on hundreds of interviews conducted during unannounced visits to police stations in the provinces of Istanbul, Batman, Erzincan, Erzurum, Sanliurfa and Tunceli, the commission's work was a model of parliamentary supervision.

In March 2000, the Human Rights Commission interviewed a number of juveniles at the Bakirkoy Prison for Women and Children who had been held at various police stations in Istanbul in the preceding weeks and who described being stripped naked and subjected to electric shocks, hosing with cold water under pressure, beating with a truncheon, *falaka* (beating on the soles of the feet), and being forced to stand for hours in a chest-high barrel of water. One 14-year-old described being interrogated under torture for eight days at Kadikoy Yeldegiirmeni Police Station, and told the commission where they could find pickaxe handles used for beating the soles of detainees' feet. When the commission later went to the police station, the instruments were found just as the youngster had indicated.

*Compiled from the HRW World Report 2001.*

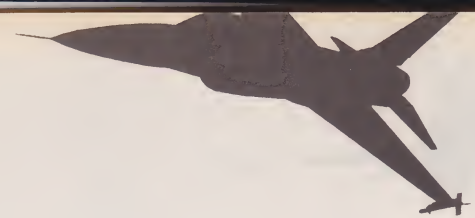
### Pakistan

On October 12, 1999, the elected Pakistani government of former Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif was overthrown in a bloodless coup led by Army Chief of Staff General Pervez Musharraf. In consultation with senior military commanders, General Musharraf designated himself Chief Executive, and suspended the Constitution, the Parliament, and the provincial assemblies.

The General's human rights record for 2000 was poor. The extrajudicial killing of criminal suspects by police, often in the form of deaths in police custody or of staged encounters in which police shoot and kill the suspects, are common. Police officials generally insist that these deaths occur during attempts to escape or to resist arrest; family members and the press insist that many of these deaths are staged. Police personnel have been known to kill suspected criminals to prevent them from implicating police in crimes during court proceedings.

The suspended Constitution and the Penal Code expressly





forbid torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; however, police regularly torture, beat, and otherwise abuse persons. Police routinely use force to elicit confessions; however, there were fewer such reports and greater police cooperation in investigating such reports during the year. Human rights observers suggest that, because of widespread torture by the police, suspects usually confess to crimes regardless of their actual culpability; the courts subsequently throw out many such confessions. Amnesty International estimates that at least 100 persons die from police torture in Pakistan each year. According to a 1999 Human Rights Watch report, children in detention also are subjected to torture and mistreatment.

Common torture methods include: beating; burning with cigarettes; whipping the soles of the feet; sexual assault; prolonged isolation; electric shock; denial of food or sleep; hanging upside down; forced spreading of the legs with bar fetters; and public humiliation. Some magistrates help cover up the abuse by issuing investigation reports stating that the victims died of natural causes.

*Compiled from the US Department of State's 2000 Human Rights report.*

Of course, it would be false to conclude that the United States is a picture of authentic democracy and human rights, regretfully allowing itself to be tainted by its association with these "bad guys." A passing glance at our spending priorities (defense vs. education, for example), who is in our prisons, the scourge of police brutality in our major cities, and our policies in Iraq, Columbia and elsewhere suggests a very different America than the "God Bless America" window dressings might imply.

Events have proceeded with such momentum, we have seldom stopped for more than a commercial break to ask important questions. Again, Robert Fisk: "Now it's true that Churchill, when told in 1941 that Germany had invaded the Soviet Union and that Stalin was now his ally, announced that if Hitler invaded Hell, he would at least make 'a favorable reference' to the Devil in the House of Commons. But we're not making any references at all to our 'friends' in the region. We have drawn the shining bright sword and have no time to worry if the hands we shake are covered in blood."

So the moral line splitting "good" and "evil" is not so clear after all. This is American Foreign Policy 101: From Franco to Suharto, Pinochet to Hussein, US policy abroad has always been peppered with dubious relationships. The difference this time around is that these not-so-strange bedfellows consecrated their union in the name of thousands whose voices were tragically silenced on September 11. Is this motley crew we have assembled really the best the can do to honor those victims and bring peace to our country and our world? Obviously not.

## verse four Under the Veil: an interview with Tahmeena Faryal

by Daniel Sinker

**T**ahmeena Faryal has a difficult calling: she has to speak for hundreds of thousands who have no voice. As a spokesperson for the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, Faryal has been lecturing, doing interviews, and even addressing Congress in the days since September 11th. Afghan women, in their head to toe burqa coverings have become synonymous in American media with the brutality of the Taliban regime. But Faryal paints a much more complex picture of the plight of Afghan women—as well as their fight for equality. I had a chance to speak with Tahmeena during her very busy tour of the US.

### How did RAWA start?

It started in 1977 and is the oldest feminist organization in Afghanistan. Our founding leader Meena was assassinated in 1987 in a conspiracy by the KGB and one of the Afghan fundamentalist groups based in Pakistan. It started as a women's organization struggling for the rights of women. But when the Soviets invaded, and even after the Soviets left and we had domination by the fundamentalists, RAWA believed that as long as we are denied our national emancipation, we could not just struggle for women's emancipation. So RAWA took part in the resistance and also in exposing and condemning the fundamentalists and their crimes, especially towards women. Currently, RAWA has a lot of political and humanitarian activities and projects inside Afghanistan and Pakistan—it is based in these two countries and in both countries it has underground activities.

### What is life like for women in Afghanistan right now?

I think that despite the reports that are seen on TV and the papers here that say that women in Afghanistan, after the retreat of the Taliban and the arrival of the Northern Alliance, were liberated, women have not been liberated. Most of the women remain under their burqas and have the same restrictions that they had under the Taliban. Even if some women have taken off their burqas, that never means the liberation of women. ¶ The situation basically is the same as it was from 1992 to '96 during the rule of other fundamentalists that are now in the Northern Alliance. Most of the women do not have access to jobs, to education, they don't know





how to earn a living. Many professional women have been forced to beggary or prostitution to even survive. The suicide cases are very high among women, especially in their 20s. Large numbers of women, especially women in the cities, used to take part very actively in the society are now totally deprived of those activities, and suffer from mental and psychological health problems.

**When RAWA formed originally in 1977, was it a similar situation, or has the situation gotten markedly worse?**

At the time, the situation was not comparable to what has been happening in Afghanistan since 1992 towards women. At that time, women had their very basic rights. They could work as lawyers, as engineers, as doctors, as nurses—especially in the urban areas—they had the right to be dressed in whatever way they wanted, they did not have to be accompanied by a close male relative all the time when they were out. They did not have to live in the constant fear they have been living in since 1992. It started with the Soviet invasion, but it got worse under the fundamentalists. ¶ Before, women suffered a great deal, especially in the rural areas. Women, in the rural areas, were still regarded as cattle. They were bought and sold. These were the sorts of inhuman practices that RAWA was established to address. But the situation is very different now. Right now, we have violence against women institutionalized—it's a state violence. At the time we formed, we did not have a state violence, but we definitely had domestic violence and many other chains around the neck of women.

Obviously, the way that women have been treated—the institutionalized violence against women—has been going on since 1992. But for many people outside of Afghanistan, the first time they have heard of this was September 11. How is it that this has been overlooked for so long by people in power? While Washington DC never endorsed the Taliban, they didn't put up much effort to stop them from coming to power, and they overtly supported the Mujahadeen before that. Do you take this new look that the United States government is giving Afghanistan seriously?

Unfortunately, the tragedy in Afghanistan—especially the women's tragedy—never got attention for years. Amnesty International called it the "largest forgotten tragedy." If the 11th of September incident hadn't occurred, Afghanistan would have definitely remained the largest forgotten tragedy. In a way, it was good that after the 11th of September incident, attention was given to Afghanistan, but this attention was brought only after there was the loss of more than 5,000 innocent lives. I think everyone—not only Afghans, but everyone in other countries that knew about the plight of women in Afghanistan—would ask why the international community was silent before that. Why the actions that are being taken right now—actions that we don't know to what extent they will be helpful in establishing a peaceful and stable govern-

ment in Afghanistan—were not taken before that. Nowadays, Afghanistan is everywhere—the plight of women in Afghanistan is everywhere. Fundamentalists, at least the Taliban, are condemned for what they did in the past. But why not before that? Was it because of the ignorance of the international community, or was it because they thought that the people in Afghanistan—that women in Afghanistan—deserved all those atrocities and inhuman practices? It's a question of why. ¶ Yet we are hopeful that the efforts of the international community can lead to not only a broad-based and democratic government. We believe that it would be only in a democratic society that we would be able to end the tragedies and inhuman practices against people, especially women. This broad based, democratic government is not possible if they rely on the fundamentalists of the Northern Alliance. We should not forget that the same people that are now in the Northern Alliance had the power from 1992 to '96 and what they did in that time. We should not forget the crimes of rape, forced marriages, abduction, the unprecedented destruction of our country—the looting of hospitals, schools, libraries, and museums. This happened from 1992 to 1996 and that could happen again. They're the same people with the same mentality and the same policies. The international community needs to rely on the democratic elements in the country. At this point, we feel that the former king of Afghanistan is the only acceptable figurehead that people can gather around.

**What has made you come to back the former king?**

RAWA for years has said that we prefer him, simply because the people of Afghanistan can compare from his time to what has been happening since—from the Soviet invasion and especially after the fundamentalists in 1992. We believe that he did not do anything remarkable when he was a king for 40 years—he could definitely do much more than he did—but during his time, people had peace and stability, security, and a decent life. We did not have all the beggars and prostitutes on the street. We did not have such a high number of mental and psychological health problems, especially for women. We did not have the extreme level of poverty that we do today. That comparison makes us support him.

**If you were in the situation that the international community is in right now, where they're looking at what to do now with Afghanistan, what would you do?**

One thing that's really important not to forget, is the role the international community—especially most of the countries involved right now, including the United States—in supporting, creating, and nurturing the fundamentalists during the Cold War, when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. At that time it was without any concern, without any attention, that these fundamentalists would be very dangerous, not only for the people of



"We should not forget that the same people that are now in the Northern Alliance had the power from 1992 to '96 and what they did in that time. We should not forget the crimes of rape, forced marriages, abduction, the unprecedented destruction of our country—the looting of hospitals, schools, libraries, and museums." —verse four

Afghanistan, but for the world. Look at what happened on 11th of September. RAWA warned these countries in the early '80s, that if you continue your support of such elements—from the very beginning they were misogynist, terrorists, they were anti-civilization, anti-education, anti-democracy—they are going to be very dangerous elements for the people of Afghanistan, the people in the region, and for the people in the world. I don't know to what extent the countries that created, supported, and nurtured these fundamentalists would accept that as a mistake. I think that given that experience in the past, they should not rely any more on the fundamentalists. They know well that these are the same people and groups as in the past, with the same mentalities and natures. Although they may talk more now about democracy and women's rights, they're the same people and not very different from the Taliban. ¶ That's what I think is really important for the international community. If they're really concerned about the human rights and women's rights violations in Afghanistan and want to see the end of that in our country, they need to rely on the democratic elements. I think right now they should rely more on the former king and the groups that are supportive of him, rather than the Northern Alliance. ¶ Some other important steps that need to be taken in Afghanistan are pressure on the countries that still support the Northern Alliance or the Taliban, militarily, financially, diplomatically and politically. And then there needs to be an intervention of the United Nations peacekeeping force to disarm not only the armed group of the Northern Alliance, but any armed group in Afghanistan, the remaining of the Taliban or whomever. As long as these steps are not taken in Afghanistan, we can not hope to see any peace or stability.

## verse five The Terrorism Double Standard

by Kari Lydersen

**S**ince the September 11 attacks and the ensuing scares over Anthrax and other terrorist threats, the US government and President George W Bush have declared an all-out war on terrorism. Bush has promised to hunt down terrorists all over the world and to also take action against the countries that harbor them.

But many see a double standard at work here. Among other things, they point to Orlando Bosch Avila, a convicted terrorist with a pages-long resume of bombings, shootings, assassination plots and other terrorist acts in the US, Latin America and Europe.

Today Bosch freely walks the streets in Miami. Not only has President Bush not "hunted him down," but his family has actually intervened on Bosch's behalf several times over the past 15 years.

While Cuba is on the US's list of countries harboring terrorists, Bosch is not the only Cuban exile with a history of terrorism currently being harbored by the US itself.

"The US has always wanted to weaken the Cuban economy and make Cuba look weaker in the eyes of other Latin American countries," says Emile Schepers, director of the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights, noting that there is a museum in Havana dedicated to all the attempts at terrorism by Cuban exiles. "The way the US and the Bushes in particular have protected Cubans who have done acts of terrorism is shocking."

October 6 marked the 25th anniversary of the 1976 bombing of a Cuban jet over Barbados, which Bosch and accomplice Luis Posada Carriles took credit for. The bombing killed 73 people, including the entire national Cuban fencing team and 16 foreigners. This was far from the first known act of terrorism committed by Bosch.

Bosch arrived in the Miami area in 1960, following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and almost immediately began to log a record of terrorist activity. He served time in a US prison from 1968 to 1972, for staging a bazooka attack on a Polish freighter docked in Miami and for sending death threats to foreign leaders who traded with Cuba.

According to a US Department of Justice report, "He was the leader of the anti-Castro group, Revolutionary Recovery Insurrection Movement (MIRR). In June, 1965, he and four others were arrested near Orlando, Florida, with 18 aerial bombs, small arms and ammunition. These munitions were allegedly to be used by Bosch and his associates to bomb targets in Cuba. Bosch claimed at the time of his arrest that his group had already conducted two aerial attacks against Cuba; however, this information could not be corroborated. All of the defendants were later acquitted of charges that they had conspired to violate the Munitions Control Act."

The targets on a lengthy list of the terrorist acts Bosch took credit for in 1968 and 1969 alone include Japanese, Puerto Rican, Bahamian, Spanish, British and other ships; Mexican and US tourist agencies; Mexican consulates and the homes of Mexican officials; Shell Oil and other corporations; and the North American headquarters of the Communist Party.

Bosch and Carriles have been linked to the CIA by numerous sources including the North American Congress on Latin America and the Covert Action Information Bulletin.

A 1980 article in the Cuban newspaper *Granma* reports that: "During judicial proceedings that took place in the United States following charges accusing him of exporting arms and ammunition, Orlando Bosch testified on June 4, 1966 that the CIA had



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urged and supported him in his sabotage of the refinery in Habana," referring to a previous act of terrorism.

In 1974 and 1975 he lived in Chile and worked closely with supporters of the dictator Augusto Pinochet. *Granma* reports that he participated in numerous assassination attempts along with the Chilean fascist group Triple-A. He was arrested in Costa Rica in 1975 for plotting the assassination of exiled Chilean leader Andres Pascal Allende in Costa Rica.

In Venezuela, Bosch ended up being jailed from 1976 to 1983 on charges related to the jet bombing. But he was not convicted in a series of military trials and he was eventually released, reportedly with the help of then-US ambassador to Venezuela Otto J Reich.

In March 2001, Reich, a Cuban exile himself, was nominated by Bush for Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. In Congressional hearings on the nomination, Senators Christopher Dodd and John Kerry brought up Reich's link to Bosch. Reich actually helped write the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which allows US nationals (including Cuban-Americans) to sue foreign companies "trafficking" on former US land in Cuba.

Bosch re-entered Florida illegally in 1988, having violated his parole and immigration law by leaving the country after his release from prison in 1972.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detained Bosch upon his return to Florida for violating the terms of his parole. In 1989, former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh described Bosch as "an unremittent terrorist," and the US district court found that he was responsible for "numerous terrorist operations."

Even after a federal court upheld Bosch's deportation, he was released in 1990, thanks to political pressure from the Cuban American National Foundation and others in the Cuban exile community. According to the Department of Justice, in 1988 an anti-Castro group called the IAC actually threatened to bomb the Miami office of the INS if he was not released.

On August 17, 1989 the *New York Times* reported that Cuban conservative Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen met with former President Bush to negotiate Bosch's release from detention. The meeting was arranged by her campaign manager at the time, George W's brother—and current governor of Florida—Jeb Bush. Bosch was pardoned by then-President Bush for the charges relating to the Polish freighter on July 18, 1990.

Today, Bosch still lives in Miami, according to a coalition of Cuban groups in Florida who favor normalized relations with Cuba.

On October 6, the coalition which includes the groups the Antonio Maceo Brigade, the Cuban American Defense League and the Miami Coalition Against the Embargo of Cuba, held a demonstration in downtown Miami demanding that Bosch and

other Cubans connected to terrorist attacks in the US and Cuba be brought to justice. On the same day, a commemoration of the victims of the bombing was held at the Plaza de la Revolucion in Havana, Cuba.

"It is a known fact that among Cuban Americans in Miami, terrorism is common," says Gisela Lopez, a Cuban immigrant in Chicago who has family and friends in Miami. "But most of them are never put to trial. Miami is like part of the Cold War. There is no freedom of speech there if you don't agree with the anti-Castro Cubans. You are living in fear."

The then-mayor of Miami actually declared an "Orlando Bosch Day" in 1983 while he was in jail in Venezuela, she notes.

"This man admitted to planning and carrying out this attack that killed 73 innocent people," she says. "And he is regarded as a hero. I see him on TV walking the streets as a free man. It makes me angry."

The 1990 US Justice Department report on anti-Castro terrorism notes that for decades, terrorist acts both in the US and Cuba against people and organizations deemed supportive of the Cuban government have been common.

"Since May 1987, the Miami, Florida metropolitan area has been the site of at least 25 bombings and attempted bombings," the 1990 report says. "Fifteen attacks have been directed against similar targets, i.e. persons or businesses with alleged sympathies or ties to the government of Cuba . . . Despite the lack of explanatory communiques for the attacks, it is apparent from the chosen targets that anti-Cuban Communism is the principal issue behind the bombings. These attacks are not the first of their kind committed to further the goals of anti-Castro Cubans. Rather, they are a continuation of a long-standing fight against the Communist government of Cuba."

The report notes that arrests of members of the Omega 7 anti-Castro group in 1983, and prison terms of four to nine years for its members, led to a brief cooling off period in terrorism. But a new wave of bombings started in 1988, the report says, including nine pipe bombings of targets including freight companies involved with trade with Cuba and the home of the director of the Institute for Cuban Studies in Hialeah, Florida.

Joe Garcia, executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, declined specifically to comment on Bosch's case but said that there is no record of terrorism among Cuban exiles.

"If you want to talk about terrorism, you should look at the Castro government," he says, noting that the goal of the CANF is advocating for a pluralistic government in Cuba. "Castro has been openly supportive of terrorist groups like the IRA [Irish Republican Army] and the Basque separatist movement. He took recent trips to Iraq and Libya. And he harbors criminals from the US, including people convicted of killing police officers."

On the anniversary of Bosch's bombing of the Cuban jet,





Cuban immigrants and members of groups advocating normalized relations with Cuba joined Lopez in calling for a closer look at past and possible future acts of terrorism by Cuban exiles in the US. And they called for an end to what they describe as a double standard in the government's definition of terrorism.

"There's a symbiotic relationship between the Cuban exile groups and the politicians," says Victor Hernandez, a member of the Venceremos Brigade, which leads delegations of US residents to Cuba. "The US has provided a lot of taxpayer funds to these organizations, and the Cuban groups have provided a lot of contributions to politicians. It is up to US residents to convince the government that it needs to scrutinize some of its own activities in support of terrorism before going after terrorism around the world. It is very hypocritical of the US to on one hand pursue an anti-terrorist and anti-immigration agenda, and on the other hand to shelter known and proven terrorists in the US."

## verse six Between McWorld and Jihad

by Naomi Klein

In Toronto, the city where I live, anti-poverty protesters defied the logic that anti-corporate and anti-capitalist protests died on September 11. They did it by "shutting down" the business district for a day in October. This was no polite rally: the posters advertising the event had a picture of skyscrapers outlined in red—the perimeters of the designated direct-action zone. It was almost as if September 11 never happened. Sure, the organizers knew that targeting office buildings and stock exchanges isn't very popular right now, especially just an hour's plane journey from New York. But then again, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), the group that staged the demo, wasn't very popular before September 11. It is one of the few political groups that has managed to organize the most notoriously difficult constituency to organize in the world: the homeless. Its last action involved "symbolically evicting" the local minister of housing from his office (his furniture was moved into the street)—so you can imagine how much support it has from the press.

In other ways, too, September 11 changed little for OCAP: the nights are still getting colder and a recession is still looming. It didn't change the fact that, in a city that used to be described as "safe" and, well, "maybe a little boring", many will die on the streets this winter, as they did last winter, and the one before that,

unless more beds are found immediately.

For other groups, those perhaps more interested in public opinion, September 11 changes a great deal. In North America at least, campaigns that rely on attacking—even peacefully—powerful symbols of capitalism find themselves in an utterly transformed semiotic landscape. After all, the attacks were acts of real and horrifying terror, but they were also acts of symbolic warfare, and instantly understood as such. As many commentators have put it, the towers were not just any buildings, they were "symbols of American capitalism."

Of course, there is little evidence that America's most wanted Saudi-born millionaire has a grudge against capitalism (if Osama bin Laden's rather impressive global export network stretching from cash-crop agriculture to oil pipelines is any indication, it seems unlikely). And yet for the movement some people call "anti-globalization" others call "anti-capitalism" (and I tend to just sloppily call "the movement"), it's difficult to avoid discussions about symbolism: about all the anti-corporate signs and signifiers—the culture-jammed logos, the guerrilla-warfare stylings, the choices of brand name and political targets—that make up the movement's dominant metaphors. Many political opponents of anti-corporate activism are using the symbolism of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks to argue that young activists, playing at guerrilla war, have now been left out by a *real* war. The obituaries are already appearing in newspapers around the world: "Anti-Globalization Is So Yesterday" reads a typical headline. It is, according to the *Boston Globe*, "in tatters". Is it true?

Our activism has been declared dead before. Indeed, it is declared dead with ritualistic regularity before and after every mass demonstration: our strategies apparently discredited, our coalitions divided, our arguments misguided. And yet those demonstrations have kept growing larger, from 50,000 in Seattle to 300,000, by some estimates, in Genoa.

At the same time, it would be foolish to pretend nothing has changed since September 11. This struck me recently, looking at a slide show I had been pulling together before the attacks. It is about how anti-corporate imagery is increasingly being absorbed by corporate marketing. One slide shows a group of activists spray-painting the window of a Gap outlet during the anti-WTO protests in Seattle. The next shows Gap's recent window displays featuring its own prefab graffiti—the word "Independence" sprayed in black. And the next is a frame from Sony PlayStation's *State Of Emergency* game featuring cool-haired anarchists throwing rocks at evil riot cops protecting the fictitious American Trade Organization. Now all I can see is how these snapshots from the image wars have been instantly overshadowed, blown away by September 11 like so many toy cars and action figures on a disaster movie set.





Despite the altered landscape—or because of it—it bears remembering why this movement chose to wage symbolic struggles in the first place. OCAP's decision to "shut down" the business district came from a set of very specific circumstances. Like so many others trying to get issues of economic inequality on the political agenda, the people the group represents felt that they had been discarded, left outside the paradigm, disappeared, and reconstituted as a pan-handling or squeegee problem requiring tough new legislation. They realized that what they had to confront was just not a local political enemy or even a particular trade law but an economic system—the broken promise of deregulated, trickle-down capitalism.

Thus the modern activist challenge: how do you organize against an ideology so vast, it has no edges; so everywhere, it seems nowhere? Where is the site of resistance for those with no workplaces to shut down, whose communities are constantly being uprooted? What do we hold on to when so much that is powerful is virtual—currency trades, stock prices, intellectual property and arcane trade agreements?

The short answer, at least before September 11, was that you grab anything you can get your hands on: the brand image of a famous multinational, a stock exchange, a meeting of world leaders, a single trade agreement or, in the case of the Toronto group, the banks and corporate headquarters that are the engines that power this agenda. Anything that, even fleetingly, makes the intangible actual, the vastness somehow human-scale. In short, you find symbols and you hope they become metaphors for change.

Many activists have learned over the past decade that the blind spot many have concerning international affairs can be overcome by linking campaigns to famous brands—an effective, if often problematic, weapon against parochialism. These corporate campaigns have, in turn, opened back doors into the arcane world of international trade and finance, to the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and, for some, to a questioning of capitalism itself.

These tactics have also proven to be an easy target in turn. After September 11, politicians and pundits around the world instantly began spinning the terrorist attacks as part of a continuum of anti-American and anti-corporate violence: first the Starbucks window, then, presumably, the WTC. New Republic editor Peter Beinart seized on an anti-corporate Internet chat room that asked if the attacks were committed by "one of us." Beinart concluded that "the anti-globalization movement . . . is, in part, a movement motivated by hatred of the United States"—immoral with the US under attack. Reginald Dale, writing in the *International Herald Tribune*, went furthest in the protester-terrorist equation. "While they are not deliberately setting out to slaughter thousands of innocent people, the protesters who want to prevent the holding of meetings like those of the IMF or the WTO are seeking to advance their political agenda through intimidation, which is a classic goal of terrorism."

In a sane world, rather than fuelling such a backlash, the terrorist attacks would raise questions about why US intelligence agencies were spending so much time spying on Reclaim The Streets and Independent Media Centers instead of on the terrorist networks plotting mass murder. Unfortunately, it seems clear that the crackdown on activism that predated September 11 will only intensify, with heightened surveillance, infiltration and police violence. The attacks could well, I fear, also cost us our few political victories. Funds committed to the AIDS crisis in Africa are disappearing, and commitments to expand debt cancellation will likely follow. Now aid is being used as payola for countries that sign up to America's war. Defending the rights of immigrants and refugees was becoming a focus for the direct-action crowd in Australia, Europe and, slowly, the US. This, too, is threatened by the rising tide of racism and xenophobia.

And free trade, long facing a public relations crisis, is fast being rebranded, like shopping and baseball, as a patriotic duty. According to US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, trade "promotes the values at the heart of this protracted struggle." We need, he says, a new campaign to "fight terror with trade." In an essay in the *New York Times Magazine*, Michael Lewis makes a similar conflation between freedom fighting and free trading when he explains that the traders who died were targeted as "not merely symbols but also practitioners of liberty . . . They work hard, if unintentionally, to free others from constraints. This makes them, almost by default, the spiritual antithesis of the religious fundamentalist, whose business depends on a denial of personal liberty in the name of some putatively higher power."

Our civil liberties, our advances, our usual strategies—all are now in question. But this crisis also opens up new possibilities. As many have pointed out, the challenge for social justice movements is to demonstrate that justice and equality are the most sustainable strategies against violence and fundamentalism. What does that mean in practice? Well, Americans are finding out fast what it means to have a public health care system so overburdened it cannot handle the flu season, let alone an anthrax outbreak. Many public health departments are closed on weekends with no one on call. There are severe drug shortages and privatized labs are failing to come up with anthrax vaccines for US soldiers, let alone civilians. Despite a decade of pledges to safeguard the US water supply from bioterrorist attack, scandalously little has been done by the overburdened US Environmental Protection Agency. The food supply is even more vulnerable, with inspectors managing to check about 1% of food imports—hardly a safeguard against rising fears of "agroterrorism."

In this "new kind of war," it becomes clear that terrorists are finding their weapons in our tattered public infrastructures. This is true not only in rich countries such as the US, but also in poor countries, where fundamentalism has been spreading rapidly.



"Those concerned with changing minds (and not simply winning arguments) should seize this moment to connect these humane reactions in the face of attack to the many other arenas in which human needs must take precedence over corporate profits, from AIDS treatment to homelessness." —verse six

Where debt and war have ravaged infrastructure, fanatical sugar daddies such as Bin Laden are able to swoop in and start providing basic services that should be the job of government: roads, schools, health clinics, even basic sanitation. In Sudan, it was Bin Laden who built the road that enabled the construction of the Talisman oil pipeline, pumping resources to the government for its brutal ethnic war. The extreme Islamic seminaries in Pakistan that indoctrinated so many Taliban leaders thrive precisely because they fill a huge social welfare gap. In a country that spends 90% of its budget on its military and debt—and a pittance on education—the madrassas offer not only free classrooms but also food and shelter for poor children.

In understanding the spread of terrorism—north and south—questions of infrastructure and public funding are unavoidable. This war is being fought in mailrooms, subways, airports, schools and hospitals, all at the front lines of the privatization and deregulation battles of the past two decades. And yet what is the response from politicians so far? More of the same: tax breaks for businesses and further privatized services. On the same day that the International Herald Tribune ran the front page headline "New Terrorism Front Line: The Mailroom," it was announced that EU governments had agreed to open their postal delivery markets to private competition.

The debate about what kind of globalization we want is not "so yesterday"; it has never been more urgent. Many campaign groups are now framing their arguments in terms of "common security"—a welcome antidote to the narrow security mentality of fortress borders and B-52s that are so far doing such a spectacularly poor job of protecting anyone. Yet we cannot be naïve, as if the very real threat of more slaughtering of innocents will disappear through political reform alone. There needs to be social justice, but there also needs to be justice for the victims of these attacks and practical prevention of future ones. Terrorism is indeed an international threat, and it did not begin with the attacks in the US. As Bush invites the world to join America's war, sidelining the UN and the international courts, we need to become passionate defenders of true multilateralism, rejecting once and for all the label "anti-globalization." Bush's "coalition" does not represent a genuinely global response to terrorism but the internationalization of one country's foreign policy objectives—the trademark of US international relations, from the WTO negotiating table to Kyoto. We can make these connections not as "anti-Americans" but as true internationalists.

Is the outpouring of mutual aid and support that this tragedy has elicited so different from the humanitarian goals to which this movement aspires? The street slogans—People Before Profit, The World Is Not For Sale—have become self-evident and viscerally felt truths for many in the wake of the attacks. There are questions about why the bailouts for airlines aren't going to the work-

ers losing their jobs. There is growing concern about the volatilities of deregulated trade. There is a groundswell of appreciation for public-sector workers of all kinds. In short, "the commons"—the public sphere, the public good, the noncorporate—is undergoing something of a rediscovery in the US, of all places.

Those concerned with changing minds (and not simply winning arguments) should seize this moment to connect these humane reactions in the face of attack to the many other arenas in which human needs must take precedence over corporate profits, from AIDS treatment to homelessness. As Paul Loeb, author of *Soul of a Citizen*, puts it, despite the warmongering and coexisting with the xenophobia, "People seem careful, vulnerable, and extraordinarily kind to each other. These events just might be able to break us away from our gated communities of the heart."

This would require a dramatic change in activist strategy, one based much more on substance than on symbols. For more than a year, the largely symbolic activism outside summits and against individual corporations has already been challenged within movement circles. There is much that is unsatisfying about fighting a war of symbols: the glass shatters in the McDonald's window, the meetings are driven to ever more remote locations—but so what? It's still only symbols, facades, representations.

Before September 11, a new mood of impatience was already taking hold, an insistence on putting forward social and economic alternatives that address the roots of injustice, from land reform to slavery reparations to participatory democracy. Now seems like a good time to challenge the forces of both nihilism and nostalgia within our own ranks, while making more room for the voices—coming from Chiapas, Porto Alegre, Kerala—showing that it is possible to challenge imperialism while embracing plurality, progress and deep democracy. Our task, never more pressing, is to point out that there are more than two worlds available, to expose all the invisible worlds between the economic fundamentalism of "McWorld" and the religious fundamentalism of "Jihad".

Maybe the image wars are coming to a close. A year ago, I visited the University of Oregon to do a story on anti-sweatshop activism at the campus that is nicknamed Nike U. There I met student activist Sarah Jacobson. Nike, she told me, was not the target of her activism, but a tool, a way to access a vast and often amorphous economic system. "It's a gateway drug," she said cheerfully.

For years, we in this movement have fed off our opponents' symbols—their brands, their office towers, their photo-opportunity summits. We have used them as rallying cries, as focal points, as popular education tools. But these symbols were never the real targets; they were the levers, the handles. The symbols were only ever doorways. It's time to walk through them.

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Naomi Klein is the author of *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. This article first appeared in *The Guardian newspaper*.



"These ads want us to associate patriotism with consumerism. But there is something tawdry about it all, as when fast food chains like Arby's and McDonalds place 'God Bless America' on their outdoor signs right above '99 cent Double Cheeseburger Special.'" —verse seven

## verse seven

# Companies Cash in on Patriotism

by Sarah Turner

**I**n the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Madison Avenue wasted little time devising ways to draw customers to their products. Some of these efforts have bordered on the unseemly.

United Airlines ran a commercial about a firefighter who boarded a recent flight. The advertisement says that once the crew found out there was a firefighter on board, they placed him in first class and the captain announced, "There's a hero on board." The commercial ends with the sentence, "People are getting back on board United."

A Chevrolet commercial showed dramatic scenes of firefighters before a shot of a Chevy cruising down a scenic highway. The advertisement ends by flashing the patriotic words, "Keep America Moving."

Even Lee jeans got in on the action. A Lee doll is featured in a commercial with a Band-Aid on his arm and a Red Cross sticker that says, "I gave blood."

In a radio ad, Toys-R-Us encouraged parents to bring their children into the store to color a flag.

The Food Network ran promotional commercials to encourage people to cook together to relieve stress and to watch their programming. The ad stated, "We're all feeling a little overwhelmed, but we have to keep going."

Newcastle Beer hung posters in bars that read, "Drink Newcastle to help the victims of Sept. 11."

The New York Stock Exchange ran commercials that end with, "Let Freedom Ring." Its associating the civil right's movement with the bell that ends each day's market speculation.

This type of ad is now a common corporate tactic. The consumer is told that part of the company's profits will be donated to a September 11 relief fund. Corporations should not prey on Americans' desire to help the victims' families by turning the tragedy into an advertising ploy.

These ads want us to associate patriotism with consumerism. But there is something tawdry about it all, as when fast food chains like Arby's and McDonalds place "God Bless America" on their outdoor signs right above "99 cent Double Cheeseburger Special."

Many of the very corporations that are showing this fake patriotism are the ones that are undermining the foundation of American democracy. In each new election cycle, corporations

spend millions of dollars in campaign contributions and on lobbyists to push their pro-business agenda in Washington.

These ads demean the memory of the people who lost their lives on September 11.

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## verse eight

# Notes on the New Faces of Central Intelligence

by Jeff Chang

**T**hese are the times that demand entertainment. In this New War, police and firemen continue to recover 4,000 bodies, the FBI interrogates a list of 5,000 suspects, and countless more (they won't tell us how many) sit in Federal and INS detention centers. And every week, 5,000 resumes arrive at the CIA while 20 million viewers tune in to see the new faces of central intelligence.

These faces are emotionally cold lone gunmen, like 24's Jack Bauer. They are built for speed but haunted by death, like *Alias*'s Sydney Bristow. They fall in love with beautiful, dark-skinned agents of Al-Qaeda, like the hapless, balding Jackson Haisley of *The Agency*.

Sometimes they fight with their daughters or turn in their homework late. In a typical 9 to 5, they might manufacture ancient Buddhist scrolls and dot them with monkey piss to prevent the destabilization of Tibet. They get their coffee and drive their SUVs to work in offices that look like last-year's dot-com.

They're your spooks next door. They have emotional attachments and cell phones. They have friends of other races. They hope for somebody to love and trust. They're no longer the reclusive ROTC recruit in the next dorm room, they're walking signboards for the 21st Century intelligence agent.

All of these shows reveal a huge debt to *The X-Files* and its exemplars of anti-intelligence, FBI agents Dana Scully and the now-departed Fox Mulder of *The X-Files*. And the timing couldn't be better. Because of network competition to fill the void soon to be left by the slow-motion exit of *The X-Files* and tragic coincidence, the shows have arrived on network television just in time to run between news clips of the New War.





But while Mulder and Scully fought for their future with rebel hearts under a hopeless rallying cry—"The truth is out there"—the career spooks of *The Agency* adhere to the company line: "Truth is what we make it." (*Alias* has an even dumber tag: "Sometimes the truth hurts.") It seems as if the new agents were born to fight for the past—restoring the Old Normal of the Cold War, when intelligence and "failure" weren't synonymous.

## II

Meanwhile, the New War continues.

Dr. Siddharth Shah, 29, cuts a fine profile—tall, dark, handsome, with chiseled cheekbones and a strong chin. On Monday, September 17, as he was leaving the Kansas City airport, he was stopped by a Missouri state trooper.

He had just arrived from New York City to visit a terminally ill friend. The trooper told them he was stopping Shah and his South Asian friend for a loud muffler; a quick lane change. Finally he simply asked for what he really wanted—their IDs. "I'm just giving you a warning," the cop said. "I don't mean to give you a ticket."

Another officer pulled up and together they did a computer check. It seemed to take a long time. When the cop returned to the car, Shah asked why they had been stopped. The cop answered, "I think you'd agree if I didn't do this, I wouldn't be doing my job." Somewhat embarrassed, the cop released them and admitted, "This is a great lesson in diversity for me."

The next day, when Shah tried to depart from Kansas City International Airport, an announcement came over the PA system, "There has been an equipment change which will require the shifting of some seats. Would Mr. S-H-A-H please come to the desk?" When Shah went to the desk, he was met by a police officer and an FBI officer who took him to a windowless room and began interrogating him.

They asked where he had been born, if he was a citizen. Shah was born in Houston, Texas. They asked him why he was leaving so quickly. He explained that, as a doctor, he had very little time off. They asked for his physician's badge, and he produced it. They replied, "We're very sorry. We're responding to the airlines' worries. Your name is on a list of Muslim names."

Shah laughs at the memory: "My first name points them to me probably being Buddhist, Jain, or Hindu. And I explained to them, 'Did you know that Shah is the second most common last name among Indian Americans?'" The agent replied, "I'm sorry. We're very ignorant about your culture. I'm sorry for your inconvenience."

## III

On the night of November 5, 2001, M. William Cooper did not die on his knees. One of the two Apache County sheriffs that came for him received a bullet in the head. The other

shot Cooper dead on the desolate stretch of Arizona desert where he lived with his shortwave radio, two dogs, a rooster, and a chicken.

In recent months, the author of *Behold A Pale Horse* was being sought for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and charges of endangerment, the result of incidents in which Cooper threatened people who had stopped near his home. He had previously been sought for tax evasion. After he sent his family overseas, he used his popular shortwave and Internet radio broadcasts to boast that he would not be taken alive.

His death did not only raise fears within the Patriot movement for whom he was a hero. In Harlem, at the Universal Zulu Nation's annual celebration of Hip-Hop Month, Brother Ernie Pannicioli spoke to a gathering about Cooper's death, placing it alongside New Black Panther Party leader Khallid Abdul Muhammad's February death by aneurysm. "The sleeping is over," Pannicioli thundered. "They're coming for our freedom fighters."

What made Cooper so compelling to rural white militiamen and street peace-makers in communities of color? His worldview grafted post-COINTELPRO conspiracy onto New World Order paranoia. *Behold A Pale Horse*, which has reportedly sold hundreds of thousands of copies, is like an overstuffed folder, 500 pages of autobiography, news clippings, photos, and allegedly top secret documents meant to document the creation of a malign, shadowy one-world government. Armageddon's already here, Cooper was saying. *Behold A Pale Horse* is your late pass.

While he probably expected his readership would largely be high-plains tax protestors and free-land patriots, the book found a willing readership on the streets as well. For many, it confirmed what they had believed for years, in sometimes prescient fashion. Cooper spoke of CIA ops that smuggled drugs into the ghetto to finance covert political operations. The proof would later be uncovered by reporter Gary Webb in his famous "Dark Alliance" series, and further investigated by Congresswoman Maxine Waters in hearings.

Cooper's worldview—sans its apparently anti-Semitic leanings—hit the mainstream on September 10, 1993 when *The X-Files* debuted. Fox Mulder's Cooper-esque rantings about one-world government, master-race plotters, alien abductees, secret torture chambers, and massive Tuskegee-style bioterror experiments felt realer than reality, like a speculative history of the Cold War in which the actual struggle was between the leaders and the people. Set against end-of-history crowing and World Wide Web ecstasy, the *X-Files* message was subversive and immediate: Evil still walks among us. Governments and nation-states are involved. All of humanity's survival is at stake.

For the small screen, it was a pretty big picture.

## IV

These days, the picture on the screen is merely pretty, as if to





melt the images of September 11 with beauty and quick-cuts.

*Alias*'s Sydney Bristow (played by Jennifer Garner, *GQ*'s September 2001 "Woman On Our Mind") is thin as an arrow, and runs like Franka Potente's *Lola* around a very short track. Recruited off the UCLA campus before she could legally drink, she came to the agency wide-eyed seven years ago, and now is trapped on a treadmill of fear.

Her fiancé is dead because she revealed to him that she was a CIA agent. She has since learned that she actually works for SD-6, a rogue agency moved by unseen hands. She has become a double agent, working with the real CIA, to bring down SD-6, whom she blames for her fiancé's murder. She reports to her father, whose own shifting loyalties may have directly led to her mother's murder (Sydney's Samantha Mulder).

These are neat circular plot devices, and each episode plays just like the tight loops of driving techno playing beneath. The exotic locales, body-tight costumes, and decent kick boxing, are softened by intimate interludes of "normalcy" among friends. "Sydney," wrote Joyce Millman in the *New York Times*, "is the perfect television heroine for the times."

The shows display a West-Coast 21st century multicultural sheen. Unlike the real CIA, affirmative action apparently seems to have worked. Translating Middle Eastern languages are no problem. Sydney's best friends and her SD-6 partner are African-American. *24* adds a twist.

Its day-in-the-life story arc centers on a plot to kill David Palmer, the first Black presidential candidate, a moderate with a real chance to win the White House (no apologies to Jesse Jackson and Bill Clinton). *24*'s Jack Bauer, played by the scruffily handsome Kiefer Sutherland, runs a federal Counter Terrorism Unit office in Los Angeles. Like Clinton, Bauer is an effective leader, but a personal fuck-up. *24*'s eye-popping split screens capture Bauer's compartmentalized conscience.

Bauer soon learns that the assassins have ties within the Agency, and that they may be also involved with the kidnapping of his daughter. Jack Bauer's mission is to keep hope alive—and if he fails, his daughter dies and the country will descend into race riots. *24*, too, is set in Los Angeles.

Unlike most Cold War spy-hero dramas, these stories require the intelligence community to be dirty. (Indeed, *The Agency* sucks because it has no such tension.) But most of the enemies will remain dark-skinned and conveniently foreign. You will probably not see agents providing military and intelligence training to guerillas with dubious political agendas who support their war-making by growing opium or coca. You will not see agents devastating the ghettos by cutting drugs-for-arms deals. You will not see the surveillance and harassment of non-violent peace, anti-prison, and anti-globalization activists. You

will not see dragnet roundups of thousands of innocent Arab, South Asian, and Muslim men and women. They will not be rescued from their indefinite detentions by lock-picking spooks like Sydney.

Sydney and Jack, along with the redundant cast of Cold-War dust-offs in *The Agency*, live in a safely fictional world in which Dark Alliances and COINTELPRO never occurred. The worlds are hermetically sealed, most secure from insecure global realities. A symptomatic theme is the loss of memory. In *Alias*, the Irishman who killed Sydney's fiancé is a sleeper, remotely programmed by SD-6 to murder during blackouts that he can only recover during dream time. He is therefore completely innocent of his crimes. Sydney efficiently and obediently carries out her dual orders from the CIA and SD-6. Whenever death happens, she is shocked anew to learn that her work has bloody consequences.

The *X-Files* never strayed far from the relationship of knowledge to justice: what you did not know could not only kill you, but millions of other innocents. *24* and *Alias* operate on a "need to know" basis. Everything you need to know is right there on its shiny, quickly moving surfaces. As Karl Rove and Jack Valenti bring together politicians and entertainment execs to figure out new ways of collaborating in the New War, Sydney and Jack are signs of redemption. They bend "trust no one" into a closed question. They mark the end to Beltway/Hollywood culture-wars. They fight for an undivided America we want to remember—but one that never existed. The new faces of central intelligence represent a future without a past, well insulated from the present.

## verse nine Watch What You Say: an interview with Robert Jensen by Daniel Sinker

As a journalism professor at the University of Texas, Robert Jensen shapes media's future. As a freelance editorial writer, Jensen tries to shape the present as well. Unabashedly outspoken in his critiques of the current war, Jensen has found himself on many editorial pages—and in quite a bit of trouble. After an editorial of his was printed in an *Houston Chronicle*, Jensen found himself publically chastized by the president of his university for being "a fountain of undiluted foolishness on issues of public policy." Letters and phone calls



"These days, the picture on the screen is merely pretty, as if to melt the images of September 11 with beauty and quick-cuts." —verse eight

calling for Jensen's firing followed. However, Jensen has been undeterred, continuing his scathingly critical analysis of the conflict. I had a chance to speak with Robert about the role of media and freedom of speech in the war.

**I wanted to start with a really broad question, and then we can focus in from there: How do you feel the concept of freedom of speech has changed since September 11.**

I think it's complicated. One has to look at both the advances in free speech in this culture over history, and the new kinds limitations. For instance, in World War I, people who said the same kinds of things that some of us are saying now were thrown into jail without question. The Supreme Court said there was no first amendment protection for such speech. Today, people like that *don't* get thrown into jail—I count that as a success. [laughs] But, at the same time, the nature of the mass media system today is such that you might argue an anti-war voice is more marginalized now than it was in 1918. I don't know if that's true or not, but the point is that it's not just about formal guarantees of free speech, which have expanded dramatically, it's also about access to channels. I always try to make the point that free speech is not just a question of legal guarantees, or the right to speak, or even having a place to speak, it's about the entire political culture. That is, if you have free speech, but you have a political culture in which nobody participates in political dialogue, your free speech doesn't mean as much. That's why I say that in 1918—when this was a much more lively culture politically, when ordinary people had much more of an interest in direct participation in political discussion—they might not have had any more power, but the culture was different. In one of the pieces I wrote, I said that sometimes your freedom of speech these days is a freedom to shout into the wind. It's not that that's unimportant—I'd rather have that freedom than *not* have it; I'd rather be able to speak and know that I could come into work the next day and be fired arbitrarily; I'd rather have the freedom to speak and know that the cops won't come to my door tonight, than to have the opposite conditions. But I'd also like to partake in a political culture in which everybody's speech is a part of meaningful dialogue. That doesn't mean that everybody should have a half-hour show on the CBS evening news every night, there are limitations. But the question is "Does the system truly open up discussion?" My argument is that the system doesn't.

**With as few chances as there are for alternative voices in the mainstream, do you feel that those outlets have gotten even smaller since the war?**

Again, that's complicated. For the last three years, I've spent a lot of my time trying to get radical ideas into mainstream newspaper op-ed pages. I've had some success, but it takes a lot of work. After

September 11, it wasn't *easy* getting those things in, it was still rather difficult, but I was surprised actually at how much *was* getting in. When I talked with op-ed editors, who I was trying to place things with, what I found out was that part of the reason I was having more trouble getting things in was because they were getting so much material. One editor told me she was getting three times the amount of unsolicited manuscripts she used to get. So while individually, I had a harder time getting in, I think if you look across the board, there was a fair amount of anti-war opinion on the op-ed pages. Now, that's only one aspect of the media system, and not particularly the most important, but it does tell you one thing: commercial journalism in the United States is not a totalitarian institution, which is sometimes what people think. It's not run that way. Individual journalists *can* sometimes make a difference, as can individual editors. Space opens up. That's why it's important to always be trying for that space. ¶ On the other hand, if you look at the television networks, there's no space at all. TV has been a complete and utter disaster. Trying to get anti-war voices on is very, very difficult. I was on the *O'Reilly Factor* for about six minutes, five of which were Bill O'Reilly shouting at me. Television is the most abysmal space for meaningful dialogue in the first place, and especially for critical dialogue at this point. Now it does show up every now and then. Ted Koppel did a *Nightline* show on dissent in America. I'm sure if you went to ABC and said "You guys don't have enough space for dissent," they'd say, "Well, we did the *Nightline* show." Well, a couple obvious points: it was a half-hour out of how many hours of coverage? And, how does dissent get integrated into the political dialogue? What happens is that it gets marked as dissent, and then you have stories about "look at the dissenters." But when they're having the experts who frame the news on the nightly news, how come opposing points of views aren't brought in and given a legitimate space at the table for *that* kind of dialogue? Well that's because the system doesn't allow that for the most part. ¶ As a practicing journalist, I don't think it's good to make too sweeping of generalizations about how nothing ever gets in the media. Things *do* get in the media, but the whole system is designed to move in a certain way. There will be deviations from that path, and we should use those deviations, but you can't rely simply on those channels because they're not fully open. ¶ People are looking right now for news about the war on CNN, Fox, MSNBC and the three broadcast networks. Those channels are different, some are better than others—I think ABC of the broadcast network has done a better job, although it's better within a framework in which better and worse don't really mean much. The whole enterprise is so fundamentally sunk into a pro-war framework, the differences between Dan Rather and Peter Jennings don't really mean much—although there are differences and it's good to be aware of them.



"If you want to talk about the *real* reasons for this war, I think terrorism is kind of a pretext for it. No doubt, they would like to smash al Qaeda if they could, but if they *really* wanted to end terrorism, it's a reasonable assertion that they would pursue an entirely different strategy, one of political and diplomatic law enforcement." —verse nine

Having the news couched within the pro-war framework goes against exactly what we're led to believe the news should be: objective, and having no slant in *any* direction. Do you think journalistic objectivity really exists?

Objectivity has to be understood in different ways. I always talk about objectivity as a philosophical concept—an ideal one strives for. Or objectivity is a set of news-gathering practices used by the industry. Let's talk about the latter. Objectivity as it is used in professional journalism is distinctly non-objective. It privileges official sources over all else and fundamentally skews the news—although not in every single story—as a whole, as a pattern, towards the views of the institutional powers in the culture. That's pretty straightforward and obvious. I think after 30 years of criticism, that's almost undeniable. There's just too much evidence and experience to deny it. In that sense, objectivity is just a cover for a set of practices that the industry uses which are profitable and ideologically comfortable. ¶ In the day-to-day world of journalism, I think it's important to distinguish between the sense of objectivity as practices versus the sense of objectivity as taking seriously a role of journalist as a critical, independent inquiry. As soon as you do that, you have to realize that there's an incredible concentration of power in this culture. It doesn't take a whole lot of experience to realize that concentrations of power tend to want to perpetuate themselves and their view of the world. So to be objective, I would argue, one would have to be ruthlessly critical of institutional power. Now, journalists will tell you they do that, but if you look at day-to-day workings of contemporary commercial journalism, they really don't for the most part. And here we get into the difference between looking at objectivity in terms of individual bias, which people *do* have. ¶ But the fundamental problem is not one of individual bias for two reasons. One, journalists are actually pretty good at correcting for their individual biases—they actually take it seriously. The other thing is that even if you have individual biases on the part of reporters and editors, they're not the fundamental decision makers—the biases are at levels above them. ¶ So instead of being upset about the individual biases of reporters, which is what the right-wing obsesses about. The fundamental question is what's the bias of the institution? Then you see a straight Chomsky/Herman propaganda model: the biases are the political economy biases about ownership and advertising, the built-in biases of the professional norms of objectivity and official sources, and the ideological biases of the culture—which is one way of saying that American reporters are Americans and they carry much of the same cultural baggage as an average American who believes that the United States is the protector of freedom and justice in the world. Turn on the television, it doesn't take much to figure that one out today.

How do you see that system of power and biases playing out today? How is it coloring the coverage of the bombings? What is it showing us and not showing us?

I think it's showing us, in its most simple forms, the degree to which we are an empire. Take the question of the legality of the US war against Afghanistan right now. It's *totally* illegal—there's no meaningful way to make a self-defense case. The definitions of those terms in international law make it clear that self-defense doesn't apply. We also don't have a UN Security Council resolution that authorizes the use of force. Those are the two conditions under which one can go to war. Neither one of them is met, therefore the US war against Afghanistan is illegal. That's a *fundamental* question that one, as a reporter, should be asking. To the best of my knowledge, to the degree it has been asked, it hasn't been pursued. That's a fundamental question of empire, because an empire is defined in part by its ability to pursue illegal activities with no consequences. The reporting you're seeing never challenges the basic framework by asking under what concept of law or morality does the United States have the right to go forward in this enterprise. The resistance to it around the world—not necessarily by governments, but by people around the world—gives you a hint about how deep that question should go. That never gets raised—the fundamental legality and morality is never raised for the most part in the mainstream media—which tells you about their ideological commitment to the empire. ¶ Now, they *do* nibble around the question of strategic issues and tactics: should we go into the ground war earlier? Should we bomb more? People are saying "Look at the journalists, they're being so critical by asking these tough questions." They're reasonable questions, but they already assume three things: one, that the war is legal; two, that it's moral and being fought in a moral way; and three it assumes that it's a reasonable assertion that this war is *actually* fighting terrorism. Which is not what it's doing, of course. It's doing something else: it's restoring imperial credibility; it's deepening American power in that region; maybe it's going to secure Afghanistan as a pipeline route out of the Caspian Basin, who knows. ¶ If you want to talk about the *real* reasons for this war, I think terrorism is kind of a pretext for it. No doubt, they would like to smash al Qaeda if they could, but if they *really* wanted to end terrorism, it's a reasonable assertion that they would pursue an entirely different strategy, one of political and diplomatic law enforcement. Well, they're *not* pursuing that strategy, so my conclusion is that they don't really care about terrorism. ¶ Let's say for sake of argument that that's true, that their main focus in this war *isn't* terrorism. That would mean that they either have some reason to believe that there are no real, credible terrorist threats left, or it means that they don't care if there are more terrorist attacks. If it's the former, it means they're lying to us, and if it's the latter, it means they're moral monsters. I can't guarantee that I'm 100 percent right about any of this—I'm not in the White House planning sessions—I'm speculating on the basis of history and the credible evidence available to us. But they're reasonable questions, and ask





yourself if you can imagine a White House briefing where any of those questions are asked. Well, you can't because to ask those questions at a White House briefing would be to end your career—your newspaper would yank you, your credentials would be revoked, and you'd be writing obits at a desk back home, if you had a job at all, because the system doesn't allow that kind of thing.

**Now, you've seen—obviously not in as a dramatic a scale—those kinds of repercussions from your own anti-war writing.**

Yes and no. I am one of the most privileged people who live on the planet. I have a job where I do exactly what I want to do: I read, I write, I teach. I have the most amazing job I can imagine. And I have tenure, which means that they can only fire me with cause. So the president of the university yelled at me in public and said I was dumb—I've had worse things happen to me in the world. I've had worse things happen to me *this week* than that. Now, I don't deny the potential chilling affect on other people. That's what's important to me: the affect his words may have had on other people. They had no affect on me. I can't think a single way that my behavior has changed because of what he said, other than that there's been a lot more attention on my work—which is a good thing as far as I'm concerned—and I've had a whole lot more unpleasant phone calls than I've ever had in my life. So fewer faculty members want to talk to me than used to. But to be honest, not that many wanted to talk to me in the first place. ¶ I'm not a popular person with faculty because I raise disturbing questions. I don't mean that arrogantly. I'm not that smart of a person—I'm a workaday kind of guy, a second-tier academic, and a pretty good teacher, but I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer. I do what I do because I have a passion for it and it makes me feel useful in the world. But the very fact that I do it and I do it publicly raises the obvious question for everybody else: *why aren't you doing it?*

**Coming back to coverage of the war. Is the way the media is covering this war and approaching these bombings markedly different than the way the media approached the Gulf War or Vietnam? Is it really all that different?**

The Pentagon is being outrageously restrictive about information. They kept people pretty well corralled during the Gulf War, but they're doing it even more now. The Pentagon learns—they're very smart people, for the most part. The restrictions on media mobility are considerably more intense. Pentagon briefers often look like bumbler, but in general they're pretty sophisticated people—they're good at controlling information. This was different in that the information flow is much more restricted. The mainstream media didn't complain all that much about it during the Gulf War, and they're not making much of a stink about it now. ¶ The fact that American lives were lost in the terrorist attacks have changed the emotional contours of this, I think, for everybody. In terms of the media, I think it's made them much more careful about saying any-

thing that's openly critical of the entire framework. But I'm surprised often at what I see in the papers—again, this brackets out television because they've abandoned neutrality with their own words. ¶ The networks have signed on for the program, but in the newspapers, you can find some pretty sophisticated reporting every now and then. Again, if you look at the dominant pattern, it's implicitly supportive of the war, but if you read critically within that, you can learn a lot. the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have been doing some interesting reporting. But you have to have a critical framework to make sense of it, and that's the problem. Most people don't have a lot of time to seek out other sources. I spend I-don't-know-how-much time online reading foreign press and alternative news, but I get paid for it. ¶ We live in a liberalist, pluralist, capitalist democracy and there is progress and retrenchment and it goes back and forth. Some things are better, some things are worse. In some sense, the anti-war movement is getting better treatment this time around than others. We mobilized incredibly quickly and, while we haven't been treated particularly well in the media, we haven't been shut out. At this point it's hard to argue that the anti-war movement is a dominant force—we're not tightly organized, there's not a national headquarters issuing press releases. But what's interesting is that while we haven't mobilized in that way, the amount of independent work going on and the sort of ad-hoc coalitions that are coming together, it's all pretty amazing in its own way. In two months, I've been on about 80 radio shows. Not because I've been hustling them myself, but because there are a couple of national groups, the Mainstream Media Project and the Institute for Public Accuracy, that do outreach for progressives and they got us on the radio. That's about institution building. You have to have credible institutions with funding. They didn't exist 10 years ago, they exist now, so that's an improvement. And the radio stations were willing to have me and people like me on the air. Of course, we're always framed as the crazy dissidents and people call in and shout at you, but that's better than not being heard at all.

## verse ten Independent Media Under Attack by Kari Lydersen

I ndependent media, ranging from free weeklies and culturally-oriented publications to more radical outlets like Indymedia web sites and political 'zines, are more important than ever in this climate. Yet independent journalists, who are





"I didn't expect to be ordered to destroy photographs by an irate National Guardsman. I didn't expect the Los Angeles Police Department to confiscate and read the notes I'd taken on my trip. I didn't expect to be questioned by the FBI and detained for nearly three hours for no probable cause. I didn't expect any of these things, but that's what happened." —verse ten

likely already branded as troublemakers or activists of some sort, and who lack the power of a major media outlet to back them up, are extremely vulnerable in the current climate.

RV Scheide, a Sacramento freelancer who works for mainstream local papers, describes being detained and questioned by police and the FBI and having his film seized at LAX airport just for daring to photograph National Guardsmen in plain sight at the security checkpoints on Oct. 12 (in a story published by the online magazine *RadTimes*).

"I didn't expect to be ordered to destroy photographs by an irate National Guardsman," says Scheide. "I didn't expect the Los Angeles Police Department to confiscate and read the notes I'd taken on my trip. I didn't expect to be questioned by the FBI and detained for nearly three hours for no probable cause. I didn't expect any of these things, but that's what happened."

Indymedia, one of the most democratic, immediate and grassroots media forums out there, has long been linked by law enforcement with the militant anti-globalization movement and the mega-protests against the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and other bodies. As early as last May, FBI documents listed the anti-globalization movement and the anarchists and "revolutionary socialists" associated with it as serious "terrorist" threats. Indymedia centers have been raided, complete with property confiscation and brutal beatings, at the anti-IMF protests in Washington DC last year and in Genoa this summer, among other times. So with the recent legislation that allows vastly increased email surveillance and wiretapping powers, Indymedia and other leftist journalists can only expect to be prime targets of surveillance and possible arrest and detention for suspected terrorist activity.

Even when alternative media outlets and journalists (or mainstream outlets, for that matter) do want to delve into government policy and actions regarding the war, the new legislation and new security policies make this already difficult task much harder.

On October 12 the US Department of Justice suggested considerably weakening the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) at Bush's urging, mandating that requests show a "sound legal basis" rather than the existing lack of "forseeable harm" in order to be filled.

On November 1 Bush signed an executive order stopping the declassification of presidential documents after 12 years. Coincidentally enough, since January the Bush administration had been fighting the declassification of documents from the Reagan and Bush Sr. eras, a fight that became instantly winnable after September 11.

Information available on government and corporate Web sites remotely related to the blueprints of national institutions, biological and chemical agents and other sensitive issues has also been strictly curtailed. The Environmental Protection Agency, Federal

Energy Regulatory Commission, Federal Aviation Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Army Corps of Engineers are just a few of the many government entities which have removed substantial information previously available to the public.

Removing government web pages is one thing—many online activists and journalists fear that their own web pages may be shut down as well. Advanced Internet surveillance technology, which far surpasses even the notorious Carnivore system, also means the Internet will become a far less hospitable place for the independent and subversive sites that now flourish there. It is unlikely, for example, that the parody web site [securethehomeland.com](http://securethehomeland.com) will be around for long.

Fearing being targeted by the government or even having their assets seized, internet service providers are likely to shy away from anything too controversial, as are foundations that fund independent media.

In just one example reported in the online publication *RadTimes*, the Hypervine ISP recently pulled its hosting of a pro-IRA web site archiving radio broadcasts, citing fears of having its assets seized for links to terrorism.

Even the logistical and financial hurdles that independent media has always faced have gotten much higher with the new legislation and changed national mood. When the majority of local businesses feel obligated to fly a flag in their window, it is doubtful they will buy an ad in or display stacks of a free paper or 'zine that has anti-Bush or anti-patriotic headlines on the cover.

As difficult and even dangerous as it may be, now more than ever it is imperative for journalists and academics—in fact all US residents—to continue seeking and reporting the truth and challenging governmental actions and popular opinion. The independent media, especially, will have to become more determined and more creative in the current climate. People can't forget that the exchange of ideas and reporting of the truth is an essential part of our defense both against "terrorist attacks" and repression and injustice within our own country.

"When you have a half-dozen different cops tell you you've done something wrong for two hours straight, there's a tendency to start believing them, even if you haven't done anything," says Scheide after his ordeal at LAX airport. "That shadow of a doubt regarding my rights as a citizen and a journalist kept telling me that considering the 'war' was on, I should have known better, that I deserved to have my photographs erased, my notebook confiscated. The enormous pressure to 'stand united' with the country in the War on Terrorism added to my feelings of guilt. But how could I stand united when the very freedoms we were supposedly defending from the terrorists were being stripped away before my eyes—not by terrorists, but by fellow Americans?" ©





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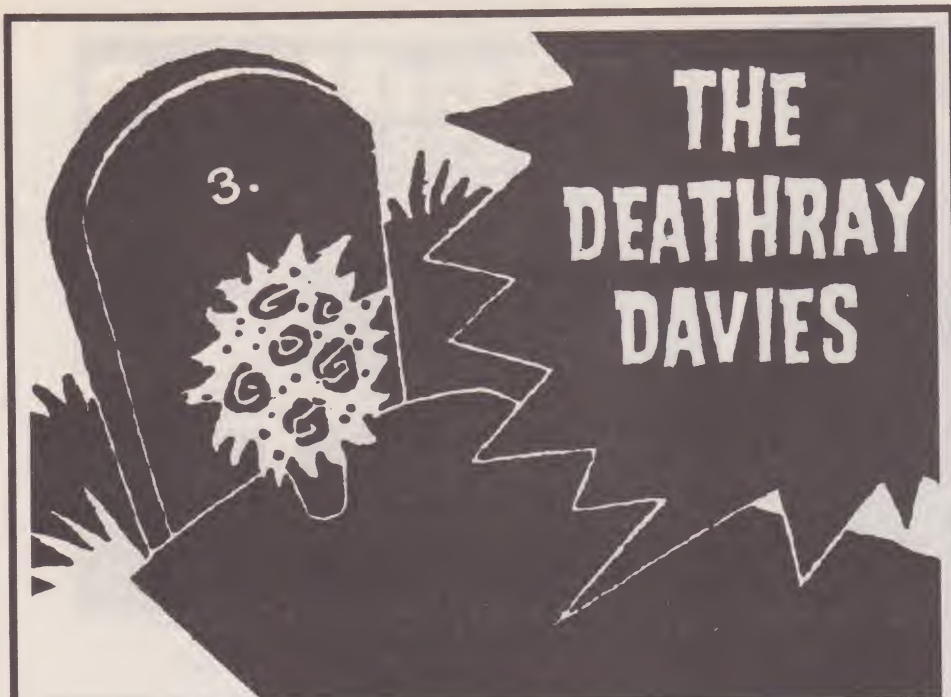


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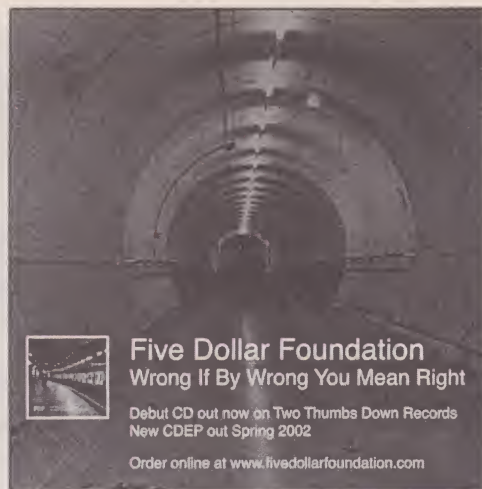
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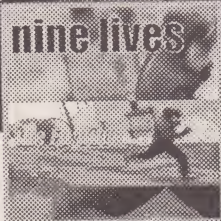
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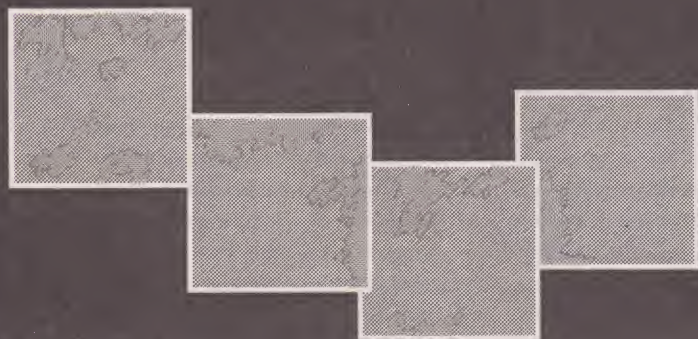
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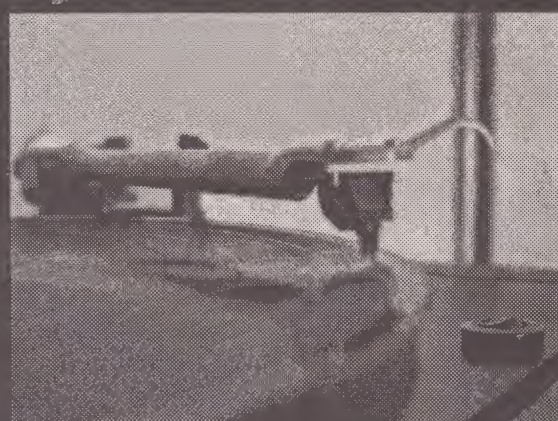
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## Battered and Fried

by Angie Sullivan

**T**he group meets in a small room in the basement. They've done their best with it—the cinderblock walls are painted pale blue. A cheap, crooked halogen lamp stands in the corner. There's a nubby plaid couch and matching chair, and a Picasso reproduction in a metal frame on the wall. In my head, I'm thinking, This is Stupid, This is Stupid, This is Stupid.

I decide to sit on the floor, next to the fake-wood end table. There's a box of tissues on the table. Of course they expect us to cry. I stare at the door and wait for it to be over.

There are about seven of us. Well, six of them and one of me. They have coordinated outfits. Panty-hose. Pink nail polish. Hairspray. They're all older—35, 40, I figure. Two are wearing sunglasses, but I know it's not a fashion statement.

The door flies open while I'm still staring at it. This woman walks in, she has to be six feet tall. She's got on a suede miniskirt that laces up the sides and tall suede boots. Her hair is poker straight and hangs in long curtains around her face.

Oh my god, I think. It's Cher. She's going to break into a chorus of "Half-Breed" any second.

She introduces herself as Swiftest

Wolf. Here we go. I guess she's an Indian, which would explain all the suede. Supposedly they drink a lot. I guess that can naturally lead to problems. She smiles at everyone and then looks at me. I realize I'm partially obscured from her perspective, by the table and the box of tissues.

"Why don't you come and join us,"

Swiftest Wolf says to me. The hairspray ladies start trying to make room for me on the nubby couch. I quickly grab a floor pillow.

This is So Stupid.

Swiftest Wolf starts by welcoming us all and by telling us how she knows how hard it is for us to come here. She says it's the first step. She tells us not to be ashamed. She says it isn't our fault.

Which I personally think is a crock of shit. It's one thing to make a mistake. It's another thing when you hang around for another 20 years. It's embarrassing. These people have to be idiots.

The air in this place is really close.

There's no window. The hairspray is choking me. I'm thinking I might have to go. I could pass out in here. You'd think they could find us a room with a window, or at least higher ceilings. What are they trying to do, traumatize us even more? And I wonder what these hairspray ladies think of Swiftest Wolf's get-up? They're probably

all thinking she's a slut and now they're not going to listen to a single thing she says.

Swiftest Wolf smiles. There's something off about her smile. I can't put my finger on what it is. It's like her teeth are smiling but the rest of her mouth isn't. It freaks me out. I think I have to go.

"My husband put me in the hospital 11 times," she tells us. Because you're an idiot, I think.

"Most of the time, I was too ashamed to go to the ER," she says. "I only went when I thought it would be a life or death thing. Most of the time I treated myself. I'd tape up my own ribs. That's not easy," she says, making a gesture of winding tape around herself. She looks like a dog chasing her own tail. This is her attempt at levity. One woman laughs hysterically. I mean hysterically. The rest just sit there.

Meanwhile, I'm actually starting to feel certain I'm going to throw up. There's no ventilation in here. You'd think they'd at least give us a fan or something.

"The last time, he really almost killed me," she says, growing serious again. "That was when I realized he wasn't going to change. We always think they're going to change. They say they're sorry, they promise it'll be different, and why shouldn't we believe them? They're our husbands.

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**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:** The number of submissions has dropped off quite a bit lately, so please put the word out. We've started a (rather stilted) discussion on the Punk Planet website, so if you have thoughts about how to improve the fiction section, please drop by and post. Of course, if you have something good to say, I'd love to hear that too. Remember to keep your submissions around 1600 words. Send them to [fiction@punkplanet.com](mailto:fiction@punkplanet.com) in a Word or plain text document. Please put your contact information on the story itself, not just in the e-mail. E-mail your submissions to: [fiction@punkplanet.com](mailto:fiction@punkplanet.com). Thanks! —Leah Ryan



Our boyfriends. Why would they lie?"

Some of the hairspray ladies are nodding slowly. As for me, I'm trying to figure out if I'm still getting enough oxygen. I'm thinking about my breathing, which generally tends to make you breathe funny. I start thinking about how long it will take me to reach the door. It's only about six feet away. If I bolt really fast, nobody will have a chance to say anything to me. I'll be gone before they can do anything. All they'll see is a blur, and an ass-dent in my floor pillow. By that time, I'll be upstairs and outside on the sidewalk, taking a deep breath. Then I'll go have a beer.

The temptation overwhelms me. I start to position myself, shifting my legs in the direction of the door. I figure I can make it in one swift, stealth movement. The hairspray ladies are starting to share their experience. I need to get the hell out of here.

I'm just starting to haul myself up off the pillow, my feet already halfway to the door, when Swiftest Wolf looks at me. She doesn't say anything; one of the hairspray ladies is talking about getting clobbered with a toolbox. The doorknob is slick in my sweaty hand. I'm probably going into shock because of the lack of oxygen. I fling the door open, run out, and slam it behind me. I'm afraid to look back and see if Swiftest Wolf is coming after me. I just bolt up the stairs, taking two at a time, past the alarmed receptionist, and out the door.

I thought the air outside would be a relief, but my chest still feels tight. I start

walking. There's a bar about a block away, one of those Irish bars that's always dark and full of old men who just want to drink and don't bother anyone. I'll relax and have a beer.

The bartender knows me by sight. He says hello as I take a seat near the door. For some reason I feel compelled to tell him stuff.

I want somebody to understand. I'm thinking, I only went to that group thing because . . . I don't know why I went but it was stupid. I'm only 20, I'm not a battered woman. That's stupid. Battered woman. It makes me think of shrimp. Battered and fried.

But I don't say any of this to him. I drink my beer and order another one. There's a baseball game on TV. I hate baseball, but I watch it anyway. I like looking at the baseball players' butts in those tight pants.

I'm on my third beer, and I have my eyes on the TV when I sense someone sitting next to me. I turn and look. It's Swiftest Wolf. Fuck.

"Hi," she says, and gets her wallet out of her fringed suede bag.

"Hi," I say back.

"Don't worry, I'm not following you. I come here every night," she tells me, and opens her wallet. I catch a glimpse at her driver's license. Sandra Moskowitz. Of course, she's no Indian. She's Jewish.

"Free country," I say, which would be ironic as hell if she really was an Indian. She's looking at my T-shirt.

"I saw the New York Dolls in 1970," she tells me. "It was a great show."

I know this trick. Teachers used to try this one on me in high school. I know all the tricks.

"I wasn't born," I say flatly. She laughs.

"Too bad for you," she says. I look at her mouth. I can't figure out what's weird about it.

"It was just one time," I tell her. "A freak thing."

"That's your business," she says.

What the hell? Does she only give a shit when she's on the clock, or what? Fuck her. I'm just trying to have a quiet beer. I didn't ask her to come in here. I drain my glass and pull some bills out of my pocket. She goes into her wallet again and hands me her business card. I take a glance at it and place it back on the bar.

"No thanks," I say.

I don't figure it out until I get home. My keys are in the door. "Hey, I'm home," I call into the apartment.

He says, "Where the hell have you been?"

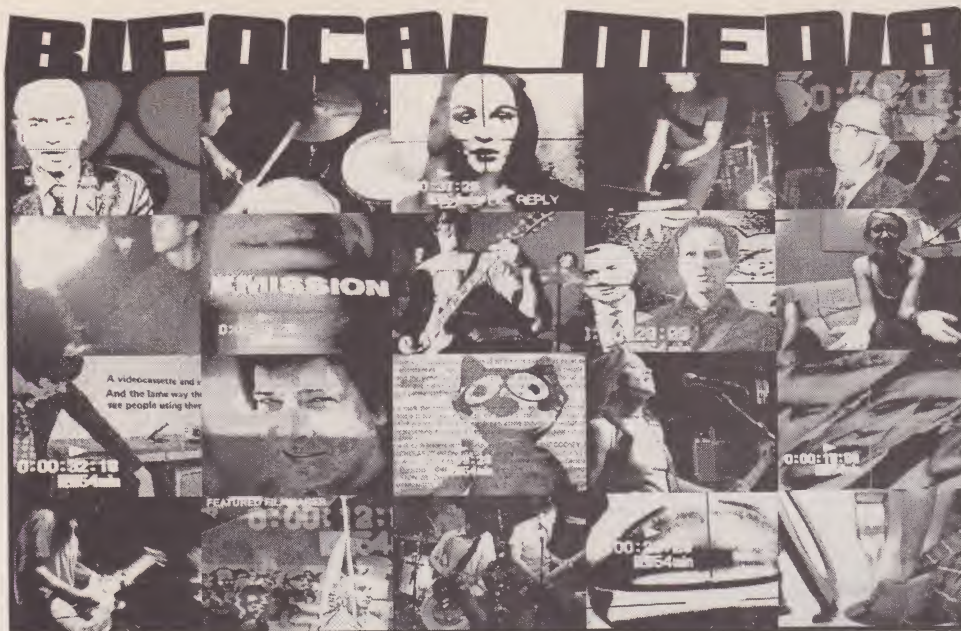
And then I realize. Her smile. Her teeth. They're fake. Her husband must have knocked every damn one of her teeth out of her head.

"Just out," I say, stepping over the threshold and pulling the door shut. ©

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*Angie Sullivan lives in upstate New York and does odd jobs. Her work has appeared in a few on-line magazines and on several bathroom walls.*





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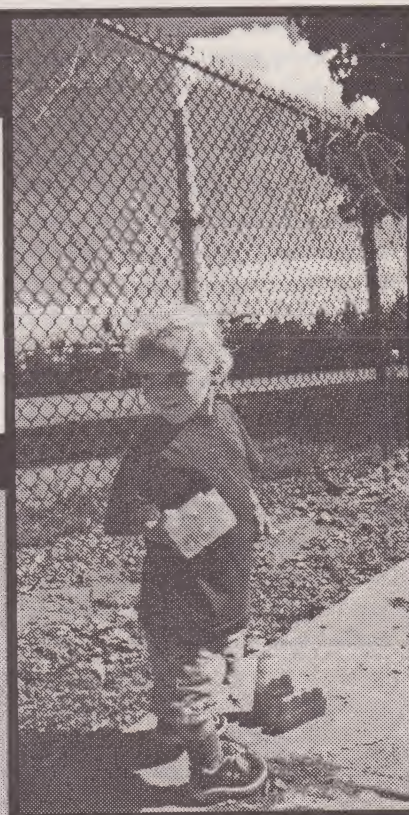
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## 1. analysis

*"We don't have to worry about whether we will have a political police either in the United States or Canada. We've had them for a long time ... It's not a question of how to prevent it, it's a question of how to deal with it since it is an existent reality."* -- Ward Churchill, from the CD.

The U.S. government has used all means to subvert and neutralize movements for social change. This lecture focuses on the FBI's counter intelligence programs, their use in undermining dissent and the criminal justice system's role as an agent of social control.

Ward Churchill is co-director of the American Indian Movement of Colorado, Vice Chairperson of the American Anti-Defamation Council, and a National Spokesperson for the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

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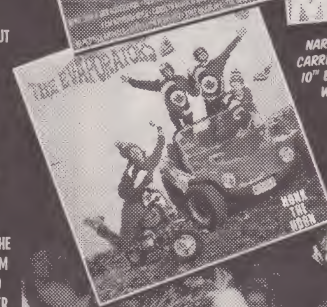
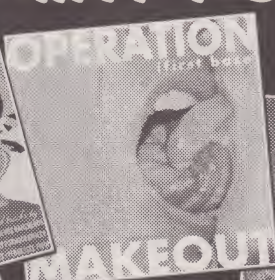
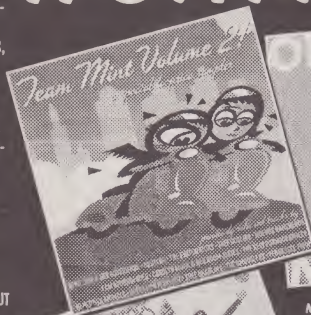
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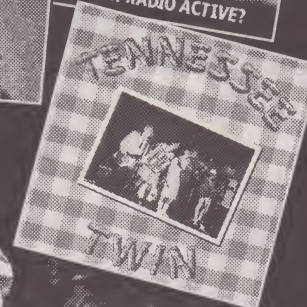
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# Know Your Rights

By Rachel Rakes

In the coming times of increased state repression and surveillance, it will be ever more important to understand how to exercise your Constitutional rights. New "anti-terrorism" laws are bound to get even the most peaceful dissenter into sticky situations with the police, FBI, CIA and other powers that be. Thus, it's imperative we know what our inalienables are and how to use them. Constitutional rights *can not* be suspended, even in a state of emergency or wartime; here's some of the most critical ones and how to utilize them in encounters with the law.

First, and most importantly, exercise your right to remain silent. Whenever law enforcement officers ask you anything besides your name and address, it's legally safest to say the magic words: "I am going to remain silent. I want a lawyer." These phrases invoke your constitutional right not to be forced to say anything that would incriminate you. Once you say these words, the authorities are supposed to stop questioning you. If you do not assert your rights, they are allowed to keep asking questions. Remember that as soon as you break your silence for any reason at all, the police are allowed to start questioning you again. Follow anything you need to say with the magic words. For example, to use the facilities say: "May I use the bathroom? I am going to remain silent. I want a lawyer."

The authorities are legally allowed—and encouraged—to lie when they're investigating, and they are trained to be manipulative. It's useful to keep in mind that if they were positive of your guilt, they wouldn't need to question you so persistently, and only a judge has the legal authority to order you to answer questions.

As for your Miranda rights (You have the right to remain silent, etc. . . ), police are only required to read them to you if, one, you are under arrest and two, they want to ask you questions. Don't expect that if you haven't been read the Miranda Warnings you've got the case. Likewise, if the police ask you questions and haven't arrested you, they don't have to read you your rights and your statements *will* be used against you. *Anything you say to a police officer whether in detention or casual conversation, can lead to your arrest.*

The fourth amendment gives you the right to be free from "unreasonable searches and seizures." Police can only enter your house if they have a search warrant or an arrest warrant, or if they are in hot pursuit. If they show up at your door and are not chasing a criminal, step outside, close the door and

demand to see a warrant. For the cops to enter your house, the warrant must specifically describe the place to be searched and the things to be seized. If the cops come to your house asking to look around, politely tell them no; they are only allowed in if you invite them (not unlike vampires). Once inside, anything they might spot (say, for instance, a pipe) could give them probable cause to search further. If they do produce a search warrant, let them know that you do not consent to a search—in those words—clearly. This limits the scope of the search authorized by the warrant.

If the police produce an arrest warrant, immediately step outside and lock the door. The cops may follow you into, and search, any room you are in after they produce the warrant.

A search warrant does not obligate you to answer questions. If you are detained, the police are allowed to lightly search your person or car to ensure that you have no weapons that could endanger them. It's best, unless your carrying something particularly illicit, to let them go through with this. In general, it's best to tell the police you do not consent to anything they're doing, and otherwise remain silent and compliant. Take explicit notes of the officers' actions and descriptions (badge number is important), and save the talking for your lawyer.

If you are facing political charges, such as being arrested at a demonstration, the National Lawyers Guild are your best bet for fair representation. Their national office number is: (212) 627-2656.

Remember that the constitution *does* give you the right to advocate for change. The first amendment protects the rights of groups and individuals who peacefully advocate changes in laws, government practices, and even the form of government. However, the Supreme Court says that it is legal for INS to target non-citizens for deportation because of the immigrant's first amendment activities, as long as it could also deport them for other reasons. This means the INS could specially target a student who worked without authorization or a visitor who overstayed a visa because it dislikes his or her speech, views or associations with individuals or groups.

Remember: Civil rights are like muscles. If you don't use them, you lose them! ©

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For more on rights for non-citizens, the National Lawyers Guild website has up-to-date information on INS procedures and immigration laws: [www.nlg.org](http://www.nlg.org)

For more on police encounters, including sample conversations, the Just Cause Law Collective website is an indispensable resource: [www.lawcollective.org](http://www.lawcollective.org)



# early to bed

by Sex Lady Sarah

SEX  
FEELS  
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Dear Sex Lady,

*I have a little problem and hope you can answer me. When my guy and I have oral sex, I don't orgasm but it feels really good. He has no problem orgasming but I was wondering if there was something wrong with me. When I masturbate I come, but when I am with a guy it feels so good, but no orgasm! Why? Please help!*

Thank you,  
Frustrated

Your problem, Frustrated, is most likely a pretty simple case of a few factors. Let me ask you a few questions:

Are you fucked up when you are doing it? If you are drunk or high, your ability to orgasm (as well as drive) may be impaired. Try it sober, your body may respond better.

Are you telling him exactly where to go to make you feel oh so good? And if he does hit the sweet spot, do you find a way to let him know to stay there? (I find "Oh yes, oh yeah, that's the spot" works very well)

Is he stopping before you are ready for him to? If so, maybe you should encourage him to continue ("Oh baby, don't stop now, that feels so good") or have him switch to a hand job for a minute and then he can go back to licking you.

When you masturbate, do you rub *real* hard to come? If so, maybe his tongue just isn't enough pressure for your particular clit. Maybe he could add a little handwork to the mix while he's lapping away. Or if you have a vibrator you (or he) could use that on your clit while he licks the rest of your pussy.

If none of those suggestions seem to work, maybe you should try sticking your hand down there and making yourself come. There is *no* shame in that! If you need to jack yourself off after he has gotten you all hot and wet, have him stick his fingers in your pussy while you stroke your clit 'till you come. Remember, cooperation can be very rewarding!

Dear Sex Lady,

*I decided that it was time I bought my fist vibrator. But when I went to my local sex shop to buy one, I was so overwhelmed with all the different ones that they had that I couldn't make a decision. I ended up leaving without one! How do I know what kind of vibe to get? Do different ones do different things? I am so confused!*

Signed,  
Looking for a good buzz

Oh your first vibrator—how very exciting! I remember buying my first vibe like it was yesterday and when I purchased it I faced a similar problem. I think we are very lucky that in this day and age we have such a wonderful variety of sex toys to choose from, but it can pose the problem of figuring out what it is we want. It's especially hard because like most things that we buy, you can't return any sex toys after you have tried them out and find they don't work for you.

I encourage you to try and get to a shop (if you are over 18) that has display models out for you to turn on and touch before you buy. It helps a lot. That way you know exactly what kind of vibration and texture you are getting. Most of your local shops probably will just have the tacky packages lined on the wall, but I have listed below some cool shops around the country (including my own shop here in Chicago) where you can turn on display models and ask questions of their friendly staff.

Now, to answer your question: There are a few different variations of vibrators and I have broken them down for you here. Keep in mind this is just an overview. There are plenty of vibrators that don't fit into these categories. These are just the most popular.

**Bullet or Egg Vibes:** These are little, hard, rounded vibes with a cord attached to the bottom that has a control box. These are good for putting in your vagina or using directly on your clit. Some of them come with removable jelly sleeves that add some extra sensation and some toys (dildos and cockrings) have a hollow space where the egg can fit in. A word of caution about these, they can be sometimes hard to get out of the vagina. You should **never** pull it by the cord and **never** use them in your ass. The best way to make sure you can retrieve it easily is to put a condom over the egg before you stick it in and then pull on the condom to get the vibe out. They usually cost between \$12 and \$25.

**Hard and Smooth:** These are probably the most widely available vibe. They come in many different shapes and sizes. They are also usually super cheap (\$6 and up). These are great for concentrated



clit stimulation although most of them work great for vaginal penetration as well. If you like it real hard on your clit, I recommend these.

**Soft Vibes:** Soft vibes are usually coated with jelly or silicone and very often have ripples or bumps for extra stimulation. They are usually great for penetration (as well as clit stimulation) and some of them have corded control boxes which means your partner can control the buzz if you want him or her to. They range in price from about \$12 to \$35

**Dual Action Vibes:** These are the Cadillacs of the vibrator world. They are usually pretty expensive (\$70-\$90) but are worth every penny. These babies have a shaft for penetration with a branch for your clit protruding from it. The clit stimulator is usually some animal shape (bunnies are very popular) and in many cases, the shaft has rotating pearls that tickle the opening of your vagina. What is great about these is that you can have great vaginal stimulation while the little critter gets your clit.

**Electric Vibrators:** Electric vibrators plug into the wall (you never have to worry about batteries) and are usually manufactured and marketed as massagers. The Hatachi Magic Wand (about \$55) is the most popular and many people's favorite toy. The vibrations are more powerful than most battery operated vibes and they tend to last a lot longer. The head of the vibe is a bulbous knob that doesn't really work for penetration, but is great for your clit.

Most people who buy and use vibrators are women, but it doesn't mean that men don't (or shouldn't) use them. A buzz on the shaft of the penis or around the anus (careful what you put in your anus—it **must be flanged!**) can be quite a thrill. Don't let the fact that vibrators are marketed almost exclusively to women stop you from enjoying all they have to offer.

Here are some great shops to check out. Most of them have websites as well, in case you aren't close to them. I have to say though, try and go to the shop if you can. It's so much better to be able to touch and feel things before you commit to buying them.

#### Chicago

Early to Bed  
5232 N Sheridan Rd  
773-271-1219  
[www.early2bed.com](http://www.early2bed.com)

#### New York

Toys in Babeland  
94 Rivington St  
212-375-1701  
[www.babeland.com](http://www.babeland.com)

#### Seattle

Toys in Babeland  
707 E Pike PL  
206-328-2914  
[www.babeland.com](http://www.babeland.com)

#### San Francisco

Good Vibrations  
1210 Valencia St  
415-974-8980  
[www.goodvibes.com](http://www.goodvibes.com)

#### Boston (Brookline, MA)

Grand Opening  
318 Harvard St, Suite 32  
617-731-2626  
[www.grandopening.com](http://www.grandopening.com)

#### Madison

A Woman's Touch  
600 Williamson St  
608-250-1928  
[www.a-womans-touch.com](http://www.a-womans-touch.com)

#### Toronto

Come as You Are  
701 Queen St West  
416-504-7934  
[www.comeasyouare.com](http://www.comeasyouare.com)

Good for Her  
175 Harbord St  
416-588-0900  
[www.goodforher.com](http://www.goodforher.com)  
*Has women-only shopping hours. ©*

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*HEY EVERYONE: I run my own sex shop here in Chicago. It's called—what else—Early to Bed—and it's located at 5232 N. Sheridan. That's right between Foster and Berwyn—right off Lake Shore Drive and about three blocks from the Berwyn El. Please stop by and say hello—I'd love to meet you and answer any questions you've got.*

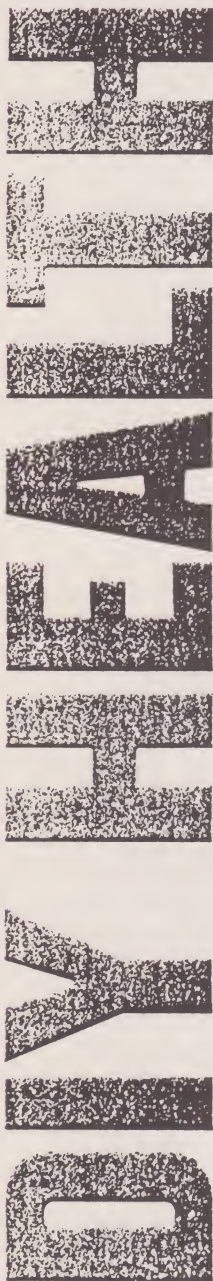
*Finally, I'm always here to answer your questions in Punk Planet: [diysex@punkplanet.com](mailto:diysex@punkplanet.com)*



# in sickness and no wealth

## Easy Exercise!

by Angel Page



**T**his wouldn't be a true health column if I didn't mention the word EXERCISE. Please don't turn the page. I promise this won't be painful!

My choice of exercise is walking, and I wanted to share with you the benefits of walking and how to get started. Did you know that, according to the American Heart Association, lack of physical activity is clearly shown to be a risk factor for coronary heart disease? Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the number one killer in America. About 950,000 Americans died last year of CVD, accounting for over 40% of all deaths?

A study at Smith College found that "if everyone in the U.S. were active 30 minutes a day, 250,000 lives would be saved each year." So, what are you waiting for? Get out there and walk!

### 10 Reasons To Get Off Your Ass

1. Walking requires no or little expense, depending on if you already own a pair of sneakers.
2. Walking lowers your health costs.
3. Walking maintains lean body mass and may lead to weight loss without dieting.
4. Walking improves your sleep.
5. Walking improves digestion.
6. Walking increases your energy levels.
7. Walking can decrease anxiety, tension, loneliness, and/or depression.
8. Walking will decrease your risk of getting heart disease, stroke, type II diabetes, osteoporosis and bowel cancer.
9. Walking reduces traffic and air pollution.
10. Walking can ease menstrual cramps as well!

### A little tid-bit brought to you by Cliff Clavin:

"Did you know that, according to *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, women who are sedentary and get little physical activity have three times the risk of heart disease than those who exercise even moderately three days a week?"

### How often should you walk?

- For weight loss: four to six times a week for 30-60 minutes.
- For muscle gain: two to four times a week for 20-30 minutes.
- For Health: at least three times a week for 30 minutes.

Note: Some people may wonder why they are not losing weight when they are walking nearly everyday. Step back and examine what you're eating. Just because you work out daily, doesn't mean you can eat whatever you want. Take it easy on the junk food, get more water, fruits and vegetables!

**A little tid-bit brought to you by Cliff Clavin:** "According to walking-info.org, a short, four mile round trip by bike or walking keeps about 15 pounds of pollution out of the air we breathe?"

### 10,000 steps

Walking 10,000 steps everyday—no matter how hard you work or how fast you go—can help lower blood pressure, and reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer. Unfortunately, most sedentary people average only between 2,000-3,000 steps during the average day.

Here are some ideas of increasing your steps from 2,000 to 10,000 steps:

1. Take the stairs instead of the elevator whenever possible.
2. Don't use the drive through windows. Park in the furthest parking spot, and walk in to get a bite to eat, do your banking, or wherever.
3. Whenever possible with home improvements or fix-ups, *do them yourself!* You can burn a few extra calories and save yourself some cash as well!
4. Plant a garden. I can tell you first hand that you can burn a shitload of calories, and in the end you have a sense of accomplishment when you're picking your bounty.
5. Get off the bus before your usual stop.
6. Take your dog for a walk—or two, or three!
7. In the winter months, avoid the cold and go to the mall. If you go to the "Information Booth" at the mall, they normally have information on free walking programs. Some malls open early for walkers before the stores open. They also have it mapped out and tell you how many laps around the mall will equal a mile.

**A little tid-bit brought to you by Cliff Clavin:** "The American Medical Association says that 60% of Americans lead a completely sedentary lifestyle (lazy), and 40% are clinically overweight?"

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**PLEASE NOTE:** I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.



### How to get started on a walking routine

1. Set a realistic goal. Start out by walking around two or three city blocks once a week. The next week, do it twice a week. The third week, increase it up to three times a week, and so on. Don't start off running a marathon—that's too much, too fast!
2. Purchase good walking/running shoes if you don't already have a pair.
3. Wear comfy, non-restrictive clothing.
4. Drink plenty of water.
5. Stretch before you walk (read on for stretching exercises).
6. Start your walk at a normal pace and do this for about five minutes.
7. Once you've reached your five-minute mark, kick it up a gear and start to walk briskly. Walk for 20-50 minutes. Keep in mind the following:
  - a. Vigorous movement with your arms and legs.
  - b. Keep your shoulders relaxed.
  - c. Breathe deep and rhythmically.
  - d. Keep your knees and feet pointing forward.
  - e. Walk at a full stride.
  - f. Heel to toe landing.
8. Cool down—slow your pace for about five minutes.
9. Stretch after your walk.

### Warm-up & Cool-down Stretches

Use these stretching exercise before and after (cool-down) exercising. Hold each stretch (until slight discomfort) for 15-20 seconds. Relax as you stretch and breathe naturally. Note: Never bounce when stretching, you can injure your muscles that way!

1. Stretch your hip flexors. Lie on your stomach. Keeping your hips and legs on the floor, gently press your upper body off the floor. Be careful not to hyper-flex your spine!
2. Stretch your lower back and hips. Lie on your back, with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Reach under right knee and pull leg to chest. Repeat with left leg.
3. Stretch your hamstring (back of thigh). Lie on your back, with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. From this position, slowly raise right leg—reaching out with arms to support it just above the knee. Slowly straighten leg until you feel tension (not pain) in your knee. Repeat with left leg.
4. Stretch your quadriceps (front of thigh). Lie on your left side with head supported by out-stretch arms. Reaching down, grab your right ankle, just above the sole, and pull your heel in toward the buttocks. Repeat with left leg.
5. Stretch Upper Back. Kneel down and reach forward with your right arm, placing the palm of your outstretched hand on the floor. To stretch the upper back, pull back with your right arm

- while pressing down slightly with your palm. Repeat with left arm.
6. Stretch chest, shoulders and front of upper arms. Stand next to the corner of the wall or a doorframe with your knees slightly bent and hips tucked under. Extend right arm and place your hand along the corner. Rotate body slightly to the left until you feel a comfortable stretch in the chest. Repeat with left arm.
  7. Stretch upper back and shoulder. From a standing position, place your right hand on top of your left shoulder so that your right arm is parallel to the floor. Cup right elbow with your left hand and gently pull it towards the body. Repeat with the left arm.
  8. Stretch the back of upper arm. From a standing position, raise your right arm straight up. Reach back and touch the top of the opposite shoulder blade as shown. Use left hand to gently pull your right elbow until you feel a slight stretch. Repeat with left arm.

**A little tid-bit brought to you by Cliff Clavin:** " Did you know walking uses most of the 650 muscles in the body?"

### Household Health

Things around your household that can be used in your exercise routine:

1. Milk jugs. Fill them with water and use them as weights (lunges, chest press, side bends).
2. Shampoo Bottles. Fill them with water or sand and use them as weights (bicep curl, shoulder press).
3. Soup Cans. Use them as weights (triceps kickback, triceps extension).
4. Towels. Use them for manual resistance and stretching (triceps stretch, hamstring stretch).
5. Wall. Use for manual resistance or support. (wall push-ups, wall sit, leg kickbacks).
6. Chair. Use as support, or for squatting (squats, dips, leg extension).
7. Floor. Use as support (crunches, stretching, pushups).
8. Tennis Ball. Manual resistance (hand grips).
9. Steps. Use as a support or to get some extra exercise to burn calories (calf raises).

Good luck and health to you! ☺

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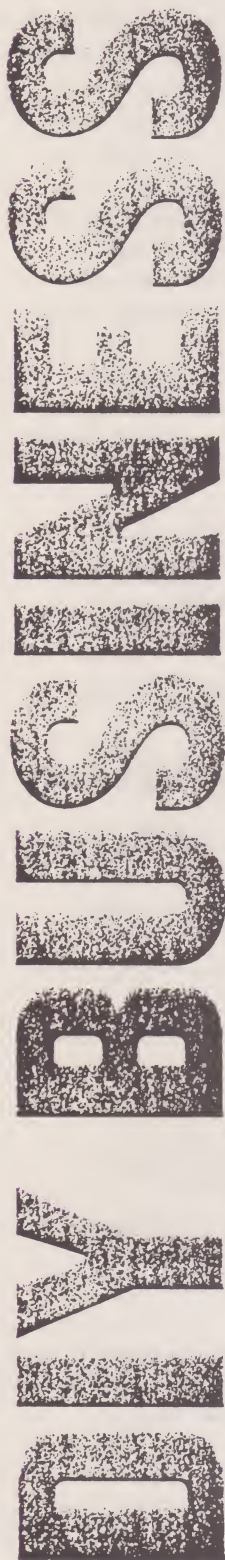
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# punk 101

## A Prescription to the Underground: *Tablet* newspaper

by James Squeaky



**T**ablet newspaper is a biweekly alternative newspaper from Seattle, Washington. Started almost a year ago by Beth Fell, owner of the Hi\*Score Arcade and Dan Halligan, of the seminal NW Punk zine *10 Things Jesus Wants You to Know*. Tablet is a unique paper in that it feels/reads like a great zine, but also manages to keep up to date with the current events of Seattle. Covering a wide range of records, bands, clubs/bars, art, and politics, *Tablet* is probably the best source for keeping tabs on the underground culture of Post Grungetown, USA.

**What inspired you to start *Tablet*? How did you go about putting together the resources to get it running? How long has it been going? What is the circulation?**

Beth: Zach (my Hi\*Score business partner and bass player for Bloodhag) and I had been talking about doing a paper for a long time. I admired *10 Things* and wanted Dan's input. We decided to get a group together to discuss making the dream a reality. Spreading our idea around, it became obvious that a lot of other people shared our frustration over the lack of coverage of the things we cared about locally. A good number of people showed up for our first meeting. When we asked around the room, everyone had something different they wanted to do—I knew then it was destined to become a reality. We chose the first Thursday of October as our release date and actually managed to pull it together in time—and *Tablet* has hit the newsstands on every other Thursday since.

Dan: October 2001 marks *Tablet* newspaper's one-year anniversary. Beth and I came from a similar punk and DIY background: Beth was a small business owner finding herself priced out of advertising in the two big local weekly papers. Her arcade featured punk shows and had lots of '80s video games. I had been publishing *10 Things Zine* for nine years. ¶ Our printing costs were funded through our own pockets, a few fund-raisers, and a

nice donation from a local art gallery. Surprisingly, a good number of local businesses were willing to take a chance with us before even seeing a published issue. By the seat of our pants, we debuted with a circulation of 10,000. Since our first issue, we've increased both our page count and print run (currently 15,000!), and hope to increase both again soon. ¶ Everyone contributing to *Tablet* had different reasons for getting involved in the first place, a common thread was a lack of coverage in the local press of businesses, bands, events, and issues we cared about. For me personally, getting involved in *Tablet* was about moving up in the world of self-publishing. I had run a successful zine for nine years; I wanted to reach a bigger audience and have more impact. What really turned me on to publishing a newspaper was the idea that I could write about bands, zines, politics, and other things that are important to me for a larger and more diverse audience than just the punk community. I love the punk community, but I think to truly have an effect on this world, we have to take what we learn here and bring it into the non-punk world.

**How do you think your punk background has benefited/influenced *Tablet*?**

Beth: Being part of the punk community probably influenced my decision to publish a paper in the first place. There's quite a difference between writing about something from an outside perspective and writing about something from experience—and people can tell that difference. I think we surprised people who thought we were putting out a photo-copied zine or something; I like that. Proving that you don't have to be part of the mainstream and play "the game" is the best revenge against a society that would rather disregard the punk community and make everything as corporate as possible.

**I know that all of the writers are volunteers, but are there any staff members that draw an income from *Tablet*?**

Dan: *Tablet's* staff is almost entirely volunteer. We kick back a little cash to our art director as well as give advertising reps a percentage of what they bring in (as incentive to sell ads). These kickbacks amount to less than a few hundred dollars per issue. Any profit goes into more pages, more ink colors, increasing print run, promotional materials and buying drop boxes. In order to reach our goal of making our paper grow fast, we are sacrificing being able to pay contributors and ourselves. Despite financial compensation, we have over 100 writers, artists, photographers, proofreaders, and distributors working for *Tablet*. ¶ Our staff finds a value in contributing to our paper other than financially. We give our writers a lot of freedom. We also refuse some of the more corporate advertising, which a lot of people admire. Writers have even left paying positions at *The Stranger*, the local big weekly, to contribute to *Tablet*. That's saying a lot!

**In regards to refusing certain advertisements: It would seem that with a paper of your size, the smart business approach would be to accept**



advertising from wherever you could get it. Could you tell me on what grounds you would refuse something and why you have this policy?

Beth: Having huge four-color cigarette ads in a paper takes the focus off the content, not to mention the smaller ads. Our goal is to put out a quality paper, not to let Philip Morris take advantage of our sought after readership. Our advertising policy is an issue that has come up a lot; some people question whether or not it's good business. In the long term, I believe its going to be a benefit. The ads in a paper say a lot about the readership and paper as a whole. I smoke, but I don't want to encourage others to do it, especially teenagers, who read our paper on a regular basis. That shit is everywhere...you can't escape it. Just because things are done on a regular basis doesn't mean we shouldn't try it different. Some say corporate ads lend credence to a publication—I say it's the easy way out. As far as what grounds we would refuse an ad? We'll deal with each case individually—no one is beating down the doors yet . . .

Until my recent five-day visit, I don't think it really occurred to me just how large and diverse of a city Seattle is. Do you think the diversity of the city is matched with the diversity of the volunteers/writers of *Tablet*? In other words, how does *Tablet* go out of its way to make sure that it is covering issues/ideas from the Gay/Lesbian community, the Hip-Hop community, the Asian-American community, etc?

Beth: It was definitely in the plan to give a voice to all under-represented communities. A good portion of our staff/contributors are gay and/or racially mixed. This makes it natural to cover these other areas, rather than making a concerted effort to do it. We were sick of reading about the same people, bands, artists, etc. I think we all want to not only continue to give a voice to the underdogs, but be even more inclusive in the future. No one in Seattle was covering hip-hop, metal, hardcore, punk and electronica when we started publishing. It inspired the other papers to follow suit. It made me feel good to cover labels like Kill Rock Stars and Mr. Lady when they barely got any ink in other local papers.

What would you say is the main focus of *Tablet*? What directions would you like to see the paper go in the future?

Dan: Our slogan on every cover is "Music, Arts, Politics, and Life." Music is a huge grounding element to both our writers and our paper. We all frequent local clubs and see a lot of live music, and it's through the music community that most of us met. The music we listen to—mainly punk, electronic, hip-hop, and indie pop—was grossly underrepresented in the local press. From day one, we wanted to give attention to bands that weren't getting adequate, if any coverage in the other papers. We try to bring a community feel to the paper, giving a voice to the views, arts, activists, and people in our city. We want the paper to be entertaining, but we also want to

enlighten a few readers along the way. A good punk song can make you rock out on one level through the music and make you think on another level through insightful lyrics... that's sort of what I hope we can achieve with *Tablet*.

Do you feel like *Tablet* is in competition with the two large weekly alternative papers: *The Stranger* and the *Seattle Weekly*? How do you think competition effects decisions that you may or may not make?

Beth: Of course there's some degree of competition, but mostly on the two other paper's parts. Despite the fact that we make a concerted effort not to duplicate what they do, I feel like they often bite our style. This might make it seem like the papers are more similar than they are. The biggest problem is competing for ad dollars since we publish 15,000 copies every two weeks and the others publish like 80,000 copies every week. A small business that would rather support us but needs to reach as many people as possible might be forced to buy ads from the other papers. We get the comparisons to *The Stranger* a lot but we really don't see it. If people actually read *Tablet*, they can tell the difference.

One of the things that has impressed me the most about *Tablet* is the consistently beautiful and artistically interesting covers. Who does the covers, how are they organized?

Dan: Eric Hildebrandt, our art director has complete and total control over the layout of the paper and what goes on the cover. He tracks down artwork from local artists and photographers, designs a bunch of covers himself, and is always full of ideas. Generally, he comes up with a couple ideas, mocks them up, and Beth and I give our opinions on them. But it's pretty much all in the hands of our art director, where I think it should be.

In what ways would you like to see *Tablet* grow in the future? Tell me about your vision of what you'd like to see *Tablet* become.

Dan: Our goal is for *Tablet* to go weekly at some point, to print 60,000 issues, to pay all our contributors, and to increase distribution in all major, and many smaller, Pacific Northwest cities. We want to be able to quit our day jobs and publish a big, fun, successful regional paper that still has indie ethics and liberal ideals. I think it's totally possible to do this and our volunteer staff is in for the long haul. We knew from day one this was gonna be a struggle. People get burned out, there are personality conflicts, and no one is being paid, but damned if we didn't assemble the most kick ass crew of volunteers that all really believe in what we are doing. We are already making a difference locally. I'm confident our paper will not only grow as a publication should, but our united voice will also gain more social and political power locally. And really, that's what self-publishing is all about to me. ©

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Don't live in Seattle? check *Tablet* out online: <http://www.tabletnewspaper.com>





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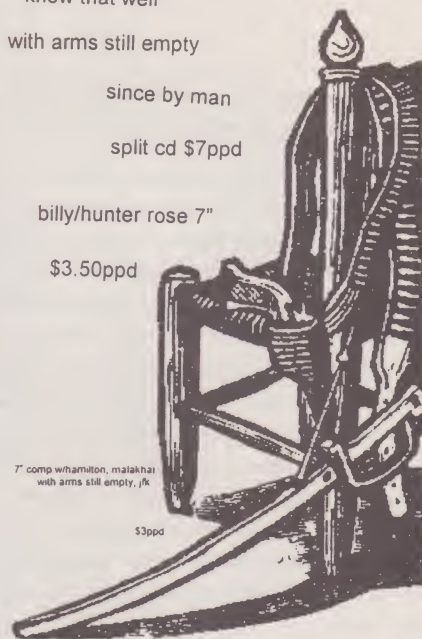
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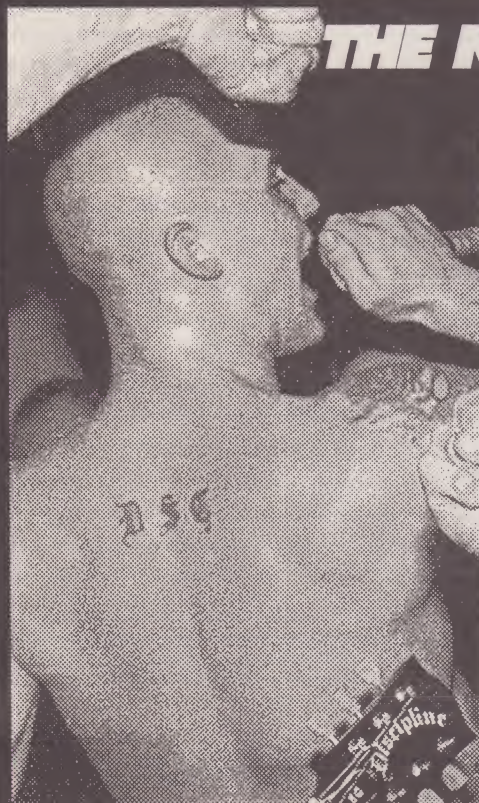


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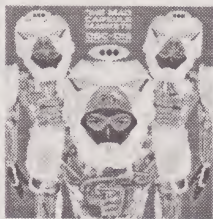
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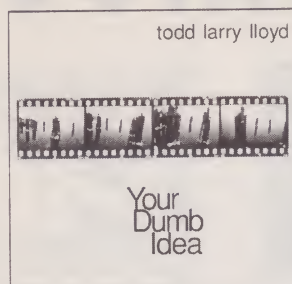
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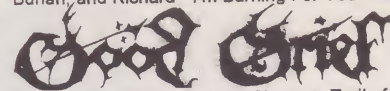
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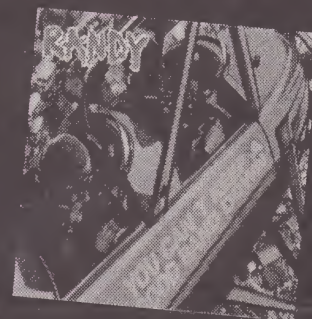
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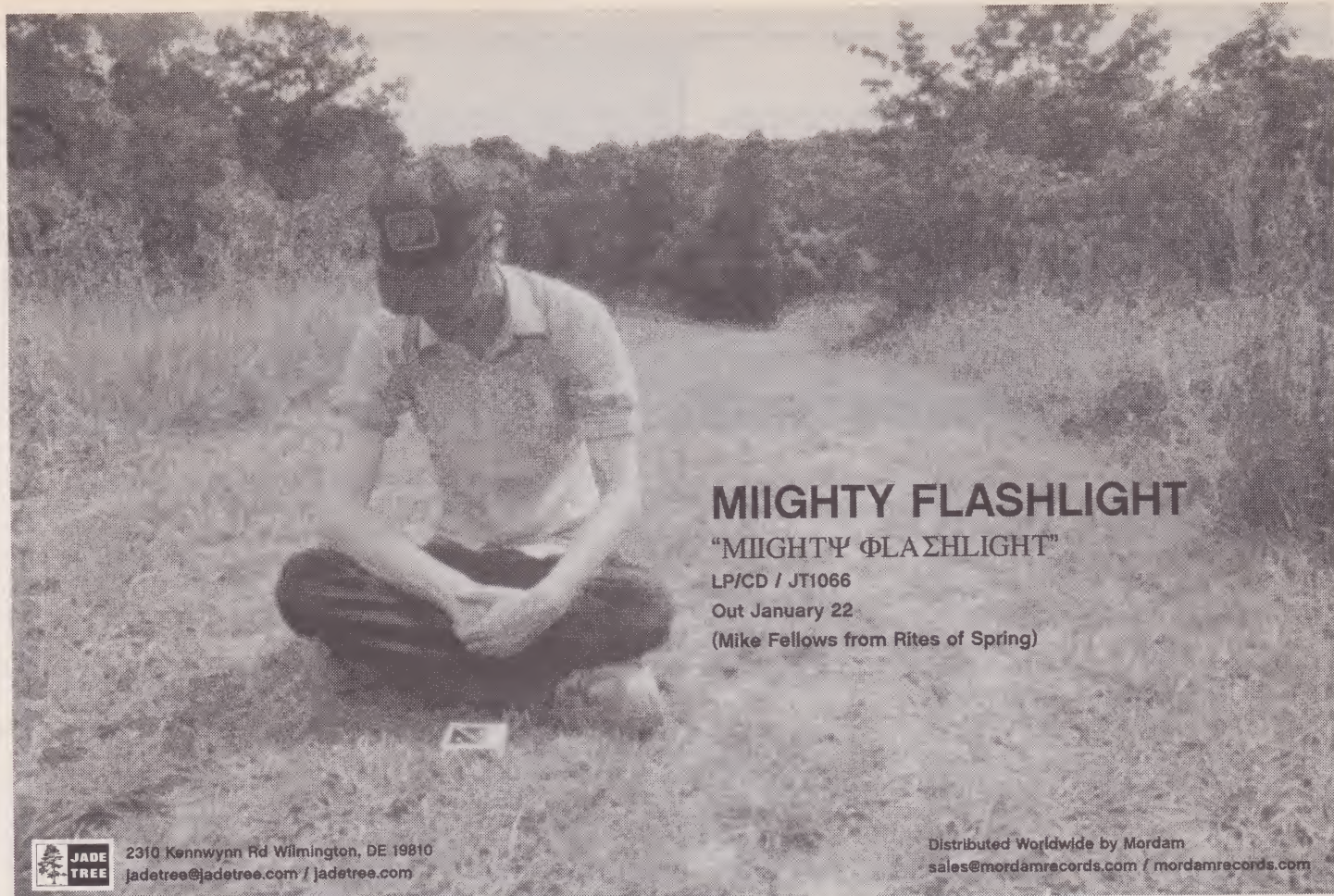


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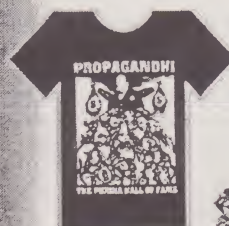
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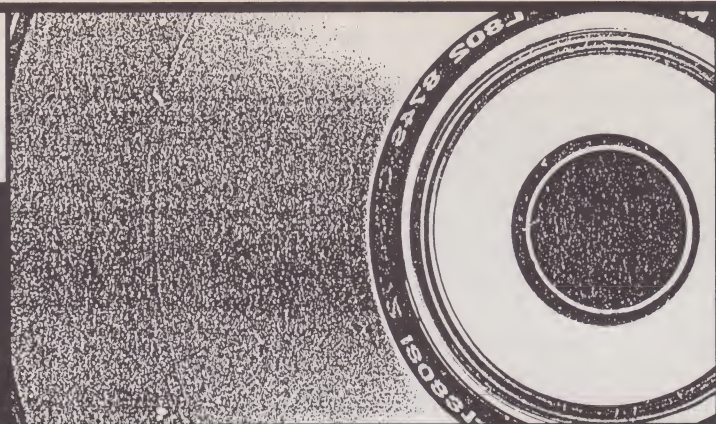
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# PLASTIC MUSIC



**Absidia - Written in Minor Key, CD** German metalcore with both fast and slow "mosh parts" and political lyrics. Precisely the type of metal most of us non-metal punks tend to tolerate best. (AE)  
Stickfigure, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308

**Acrimonia / Cloudburst - Split, 10"** 2 songs each from these French metal hardcore bands. The standard riffs and screamed vocals. Acrimonia are reminiscent of Acme with some quiet times doing tribal drumbeats. Cloudburst doesn't stray too far from the same sound, but they remind me more of Reversal of Man. (SY)  
Exutoire, 27 rue du Grand Port, 79000 NIORT

**Altro—Candore, CD** I saw the worst band of my life at El Paso Occupato in Torino, Italy, where this band hails from. This isn't them, but it's pretty straight-forward Italian rock in that way that seems behind the times. (KR)  
Love Boat, Casella Postale 215, 10064 Pinerolo, Torino, Italy, <http://stop.at/love-boat>

**Ambrose - Transatlantic Blues, CD** Take Husker Du, take away the honest vocals, record it real professionally, add some generous dashes of emo salt, and this is what you get. Good, but missing that recklessness... (AS)  
Defiance Records, Rittstr. 52, 50668 Koln, Germany

♪ **American Monsters / Betty Gone Bad - Split, 7"** The American Monsters turn in two dirty tunes that please the rock soul within. The first of which hikes through a peak-and-valley anthemic tour. The second song shines even more with its code-red, needle-burying vocals and frantic pace changes. The guitar solos made of high-pitched fever help too. Not particularly proving a point, but it's a touch so many don't bother to consider these days. Thank you for making unnecessary "woo-hoo" noises. I needed that. Betty Gone Bad forage into a simple pleasuredome of punk. Reminds me of Cigaretteman in all the nicest ways. I can relate even more with it coming from some young, mid-western ragamuffins though. No one on this record re-invented the wheel, but they did make a sweet bike-and-cart setup they can cruise down hills with. Thanks for letting us hitch along with you for a few. (RB)  
Modern Radio Record Label, PO Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408

**Ann Beretta - New Union... Old Glory, CD** N.R.A. approved, modern day gunslinger music, comparable to Rancid minus the infectious melodies. I've never been an Ann Beretta man, nor am I today. I had one of their earlier discs and ended up selling it in order to get a 40 oz. of O.E. 800. Think I'll stick to the same game plan...thanks for the limp whiskey dick guys! (JG)  
Lookout! Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley CA 94703

**The Anniversary/Superdrag—split, CDEP** The Anniversary and Superdrag kick out some forgettable numbers in late '70s vein like the Strokes. Pop with no bite that feels like it belongs on the *Almost Famous* soundtrack. (KR)  
Vagrant Records, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90403,

**Avenged Sevenfold - Warmness on the Soul, CD** An extremely silly handful of crunching, brain-deadening songs supporting a very bad Poison-esque piano ballad. Did I mention it's a fancy enhanced CD with a video? I guess you'd better jump right on that. (RB)  
Goodlife Recordings

**Backstabbers Inc - While You Were Sleeping, CD** Heavy ass metal hardcore. Reminds me of Turmoil or Converge. Great production and lay-out. Similar to Lickgoldensky, these guys are totally talented and deserve someone better than me. You guys should hang out together and curl your hair and eat bon bons and talk shit about how I "finish" too soon. (NS)  
Trash Art!, PO Box 725, Providence, RI 02901

**The Banned - Songs of Innocence and Experience, CD** Seven plus songs with above average insightful lyrics all sung in a Descendents sort of manner. I give them two more thumbs up for the use of cleaner guitars instead of that massive Marshall/Gibson combo that dominates all of today's releases. (AS)  
PO Box 2517, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009

♪ **Blood Or Whiskey - No Time To Explain, CD** For the kids that enjoy the traditional Irish drinking music and are tired of hearing those Pogues albums, Blood Or Whiskey is the band for you. This is punk rock played with a banjo, tin flute, guitar, bazouki, drums, bass and guitar with plenty of sing a longs and a gravel pit voice that gives Stubbs of

About our new review section: We still review all the records we receive, but we only give longform reviews to records our review staff decides they want to highlight. Those reviews are marked with an ear icon, which signifies that they deserved another listen... or something like that. That doesn't mean the ones that get short reviews aren't worthy, just that the reviewer decided that they could write about another record better. That also doesn't mean that all the ear-marked reviews are positive, just that a reviewer had something to say about them. Also, we now give each reviewer a "spotlight" section, where they can write about an old album they really liked and write about what they're currently listening to, which should give you, the reader, a better feel for what that reviewer's got going on—which in turn allows you to make a more informed decision about whether or not you agree with said reviewer. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your record, that doesn't mean that it's totally terrible or anything like that. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.



Leatherface a run for his money. But you know what? B Or W is probably the best thing I've heard in a while. "No Time To Explain" embraces Irish tradition and punk rock in a way that I didn't think was possible. Not only is it great music, it's a great time each time you listen. Some of the tunes even sound like old standards at time because they are played and sung with such honesty and heart. Hell, even the love song "Chloe" has sincere lyrics until you read the lyrics to the chorus ("I want your body Chloe, I need you body, Chloe..."). However, the appeal is so irresistible and believable you can't help know it's true and then you will sing a long. This is album is no joke and the kids love. So will you. (DM)

Eire Records, mero32@eircom.net www.bloodorwhiskey.com

**The Blow Up - True Noise, CD** Rock and roll for sure. The Blow Up are right up the alley of all the other guitar-balls-to-the-wall variety bands. AC/DC created the monster and The Blow Up are here to emulate it. (EA)

Empty Records US PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102

**The Boardlords - S/T, CD** Multivocaled frat boy style punk rock with lots of references to getting wasted, girls and, obviously, skateboarding. (AS)

Steve May, 264-King St. c-12, Port Chester, NY 10573

**Boredom-Squat-Thrust Captain, CD** OK, I'll skip the obvious band-name-related review here and just say this is standard melodic punk with vocals that stay pretty much on key. It's not obnoxious, it's not really good, it's just there. (KR)

Grey Van, PO Box 860116, St. Augustine, FL 32086

**Brad Senne-That's Silence Talkin', CD** So do you think this guy is tired of getting compared to Elliott Smith? Yeah, well, get used to it, buddy, 'cause you sound just like him. Boy-with-acoustic-guitar stuff you kinda have to be in the mood for—but enjoyable. (KR)

Self-released, b8senne@hotmail.com

**Brassknuckle Boys - American Bastard, CD** Street punk that leans toward the straight up rock and roll. This release is solid with covers from of Kris Kristofferson (ask your dad), Hanoi Rocks (if you even have to ask...) and Skrewdriver (from the early pre-white power years). If you dig the rock drenched punk, this is so worth your time. (DM)

Haunted Town Records, 1658 Milwaukee Ave. #169 Chicago, IL 60647

☞ **Brother's Keeper - Fantasy Killer, CD** More metal than punk. Tastes like warm beer. Complete with an essay on "scene suicide"—comes off as more of a self-obituary. I'm so sick of people telling me what is "cool" and how to think for myself. They talk the talk, but don't walk the walk. If they were trying to score some intellectual points, they should've had a sticker on the album to buy some Propagandhi and not waste your money on this. Comes with 295 megaBYTES of interactive media, and I just gave you my 295 megaBITES of my DEE-ACK! (JG)

Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls N.J. 07724

**Cave In - 2 Song, CD EP** As they dish out some of their last recordings on the Hydra Head label, Cave In show themselves manifesting into a radio-ready college rock band. The Jupiter album was amazing in many ways, yet this is very weak and leads me to believe that the party is over. (SY)

Hydra Head Records, PO Box 990248, Boston MA 02199

**Champion - Come Out Swinging, CD** Old school hardcore put forth in the year 2001 with importance. And when everything else is working is your favor, throw in a Dag Nasty cover and I might be impressed. (SY)

Phyte Records, PO Box 90363, Washington D.C. 20090

**The Connie Dungs - Eternal Bad luck Charm, CD** Yeah, they have that classic Punk Rock sound, but thing that caught my attention with this band was the vocals. This guy's got a frog in his throat or something, it's pretty rad, keeping them off the "I swear I've heard this before" list. Of course, they keep you waiting for a, perhaps, needed outburst of rage-filled screams, but don't get your hopes up, this stuff's extra happy. (RS)

**Costa's Cake House - S/T, CD** European crust debut CD EP that's sure to please both fans of fast as hell Havoc Records sounding bands and fans of slower more growled grindcore sounding bands. Some of the songs are in English and some are in German, but you won't know which are which! (AE)

Stickfigure, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308

**Costa's Cake House - S/T, CDEP** German noise-core so dark that even though my disc is cracked, it plays all the way through. Good thing the lyrics are here, because it sounds like the monster from Krull is growling in my ear. Yikes!! Where's my Ynyr Star?! I can't even throw a Frisbee—boy am I in trouble now!! (JG)

Nanouk de Meijere, Bachstr. 77, 76185 Karlsruhe, Germany

**Craw / Sic Bay - split 7"** I wonder if the ads say: "We sound like Tool." At least those would somewhat be telling the truth. (RB)

Obtuse Mule

**Crawspace - Enter the Realm of Chaos, CD** This is truly sickening. They're trying to grunt and palm mute all the way to the bank. (RB)

Final Beatdown Records

**The C\*nts - Oh No It's The C\*nts, CD** I know these guys are one of those older punk bands that never made a big name for them selves back in the day. There may have been a reason for that. New goofy stuff that people from Chicago probably may dig. Maybe. (DM)

Disturbing Records, 3238 S. Racine Chicago, IL 60608

☞ **De Facto - Megaton Shotgun, CD** As some of you older readers or those whose just thirst for more then just standard punk, may strive for something more. As some of you may pursue more rock, or retro, or hip-hop, or whatever, there are even more alternatives out there. For those who go for something more ground breaking, this release may just tickle your fancy. As some may have seen on tour earlier this year, this features Cedric and Omar of ATDI. But this is not ATDI by any means. Sidetrack for a sec, do you remember that ATDI split with Sunshine. There was that rock out tune and the stand out drum and base styled tune. This is a progression step from that point by leaps and bounds. Megaton Shotgun is a Latin flavored, mostly instrumental, experimental dub CD that keeps on getting better per listen. This description is actually right on for music that is not easy to describe. It's passive and in your face at the same time. It grooves and ventures into the unknown. It's beautiful and charmingly ugly at the same time. For those familiar with dub, you know there is relentless beat and rhythm that keeps your head swaying. Take that and give it this intriguing and a very curious, darker quality to it completing this array of non-sampled sounds. And that is my attempt to explain De Facto. It's not for everyone, but for those willing to give it a whirl, you will not be disappointed. (DM)

GSL, PO Box 178262 San Diego, CA 92177

**The Dead Leaves Rising - Waking Up On the Wrong Side of No One, CD** Very mellow, very somber, and very acoustic. The fancy finger picking is starting to pluck the arteries of my aorta, and these catchy lullabies are growing on me. This could definitely be promoted during a make out scene on WB's Roswell. (JG)

Plow City Records- PO Box 1604 Moline, IL 61266-1604



### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andy Slob (AS)

The other day I was trying to think of a record that was not released in the original days of punk or even post punk that has really stood the test of time. You know, something that does it for you every time just like it did the first time that you heard it. The one record that kept coming to mind was BIKINI KILL's "New Radio" seven inch. Three songs that are just massive. The first track, "New Radio", blasts forth with all of the intensity, if not more, than the first wave of punk in the late seventies. "Rebel Girl" follows, and while its narrative seems to be something completely different, it is a goddamned latter day anthem that should be second behind "Smells Like Teen Spirit" on every critic's list. Last is "Demirep", my favorite, that starts with the classic line "I'm sorry that I'm getting chubby" before ripping into an original rewrite of what's wrong with all of that that is rich kid suburbia. All three tunes are whipped in an emotional torture fest. This appears to be real honest, raging angst which is all enhanced by Joan Jett's collaboration and quality punk rock production. This release, while the others aren't too shabby, is the one to get. I've tried to turn so many people onto this record, but they're all turned away by some unfound gossip that this band is all about man hate. I have every release, and I just don't see it. Lyrically, they're better and more original than ninety percent of the crap out there. Even if they do hate men, so what, I hate myself too! This is new radio, this is rock and roll!

Things that I've bought and not thrown away: Dead Moon "Trash & Burn", White Stripes "Blood Cells", The Godz "Contact High", and Bob Dylan's "Love and Theft".

**Dexter Romweber - Chased By Martians, CD** My man Dex here was from a band called Flat Duo Jets. Maybe you heard of him. Well he's playing some crazy rock-a-billy in the key of "That's cool. Fucked up sounding, but cool." This has a real twist to it but definitely should not be snubbed. (DM)

Manifesto Records Inc., 740 N La Brea Ave. Second Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90038-3339

**The Dimestore Haloes - Long Ride To Nowhere, CD** I always thought that the Dimestore Haloes were a poor man's pop punk band. Funny, I still feel this way after listening to Long Ride To Nowhere. (EA)

Peldao Records 521 W. Wilson #C103 Dosta Mesa, CA 92627

**DirtBike Annie & Kung Fu Monkeys - The Wedding EP, 2x7"** 6 songs of love on sweaty vinyl. One old, one new, and one vice-versa cover from each band respectively, dedicated to friends of the two bands on their special day. DBA play some goofy new wave and chirpy pop-punk ditties with male/female vocal twists, while KFM sounds like the bizarro-beach boys. A fucking cool wedding present. If only I knew Sicko and Sinkhole...and if they only still existed...a man can dream. (JG)

Whoa Oh Records- 52 McLoughlin St., Glen Cove New York, NY 11542

**Doing Time - The Politics of Imprisonment, CD** American Indian Movement's Ward Churchill delivers over an hours worth of information on the U.S governments efforts to subvert and neutralize social change movements, and it's use of the criminal justice system to achieve this. Informative and intriguing, this is taken from a live lecture at the University of Winnipeg. Word. Or should I say 'Ward'. (JG) www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

**Don Knotts - A Black Day For Mayberry, 7"** Screechy hardcore fueled by an influence of Charles Bronson and Reversal Of Man. I never know what to think of hardcore bands out of Grand Rapids, MI anymore, but this one will suffice and I am impressed! (SY)

Friction Records, PO Box 6605, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

**The Dorks - S/T, CD** Some of my favorite bands consist of 'dorks' (i.e. Sicko or Sinkhole), but these guys aren't dorky enough. Mediocre, mellow garage pop. Catchy, without being contagious. Forgettable...no, forgotten....no...I forget. (JG)

Man With A Gun Records, PO Box 15327, Boston, MA 02215

**Dugong - The Eastmoor Rules, CD** England's Bombed Out Records has some decent releases (see Joe Ninety review). This is a catchy as hell band playing some pretty mature sounding punk rock, even border line emo (in that good way). Some of the songs seem a bit long, but it's in no way a painful listen. Dugong is not groundbreaking either,

but it's a damn fine release to listen to. There's a lot of heart in this up-tempo release as well. Dugong will probably go far if they keep up the effort. (DM)

Bombed Out Records, PO Box 17 Leeds, LS8 1UP, UK

**Dumprtruck - Lemmings Travel To The Sea, 2XCD** Do you remember Dumprtruck from the Eighties? I lost the tear sheet for this release so I can only tell you a few things. I remember playing them a lot at the college station while Dee-Jaying. Disc one is studio songs that I am not sure whether they are new, but probably are. Disc two was recorded at CBGB's in 1986 and 1988. Very mellow, but interesting twang going on. (EA)

Devil in The Woods PO Box 6217 Albany, CA 94706

**Duotang - The Bright Side, CD** Duotang returns to make more energetic pop with a big 60's Brit influence. It's growing on me, and the backing vocals are dazzling. (AE)

Mint Records, PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC V6B 3Y6 CANADA

**Duotang - The Bright Side, CD** Very poppy, could find its way onto television in a good way. So catchy, and with additional instruments on the third Duotang CD things stay interesting through fourteen songs. In two weeks I will wish I wrote a longer review, because I will like this that much more then. (EA)

Mint Records PO Box 3613 Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6

**Eighteen Visions - The Best of..., CD** As some you may know, Eighteen Visions is the band with most of the abusive adjectives and phrases of beatings and destruction to describe their music. You know what? They fucking deserve it. Especially now. On this collection, instead of re-releasing poorer quality recordings of older material, these kids start from scratch and redo ten "\_\_\_\_\_(fill in adj.)" tracks to meet their newer standards of 18V music. They also included a new track as well if that wasn't incentive enough. If you thought their music was \_\_\_\_\_(adj.) before, these newer versions will just \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) you and give you a new \_\_\_\_\_ (noun). And that's no joke. Embrace the angry and be on your way. (DM)

Trustkill Records; 23 Farm Edge Ln., Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

**Electric Eel Shock / The Get-Go - split CD** Electric Eel Shock outta Japan thrust forth their meaty chops and lick their way to a bubble gum Kiss/AC-DC playland. Weird lyrics that gain cuteness through the translation, but if this band were from Montana and sounded exactly the same everyone would hate them. Think about that. They get automatic permission from us to be stupid. This is good, though. I can dig almost any band that doesn't take itself too seri-



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Art Ettinger (AE)

Humor is surprisingly scarce in punk these days, but Boston's SHOWCASE SHOWDOWN took comedic punk to new heights. The Showcase Showdown is basically a parody of a political punk band, with highbrow comedic lyrics and a straightforward sound heavily influenced by early punk and Oi. Yes, both of their full-lengths rule, but this is a band whose best work is on their several 7"s. A compilation LP of their singles and comp tracks is long overdue. Their finest record is "All the Presidents' Heads," an amazing 5 song EP. The song "Last of the Whigs," if not the only punk song ever written about Millard Fillmore, is certainly the only one that praises the man: "who needs four years of incidents? For Millard we are militant!" Other hits on the record include "Godzuki," "Bob Barker Is Innocent," and perhaps the band's best-known song, "Fuck You, Norway." This 7" was also released on a Tario Records tape along with the band's "Chickens" 7" and the song "Liberace" from their first EP. Between the vinyl on Pogo stick and the tape on Tario, it's not terribly hard to find. Sadly, the band recently broke up. I was fortunate enough to see 'em live several times in at least three different cities, and they got me each and every time. I miss 'em, but luckily some of the members formed a new band called The Spitzz and will hopefully produce more amazing comedic punk for years to come.

Lately I've been listening to the new Scrotum Grinder and a lot of Limecell. I've also been listening to a ton of ANTISEEN. You're a damn fool if you live anywhere near Pittsburgh or Cleveland and miss ANTISEEN's shows on January 25th and 26!

ously. "Rock'n Roll Can Rescue the World" is by far their best tune. A big burly classic rock riff milked for all it's worth and laden with shout-outs to all the great rockers and wonderfully strange high-pitched chirping backup vocals. The Get-Gos have something romantic in their overall voice that makes you forget things. I really like the guitar work in this band. It can carry the two instrumentals just fine. Besides the nicely melodic music this band comes up with some good vocals as well that don't sound like every boring macho guy out there. (RB) Micro Music, 151 Allen St. #4C, New York, NY 10002

♪ **End It - Meet Your Maker, CD** This band is the only thing that keeps me from writing off Detroit completely. The only time I have been there in the last year is to see End It play at the Shelter, and besides the legalized gambling; they are the only reason to bring me back. Their sound is dirty but speeds not unlike S.O.D. or Entombed. I hesitate to call this a hardcore band, because their early 90's thrash metal influences are so strongly shown. Throw in some impressive guitar solos and the hardcore kids will be left scratching their heads, "I'm not supposed to like this, but it sounds so good." The lyrics, much like the city of Detroit, are scented with death, irritability, and self-destruction. A strong beginning for this band and some of the best liner notes I have read in a long time. (SY) Atarms Mechanics, Po Box 27, Marshall, MI 49068

**Erase Errata - Other Animals, CD** Great female singing reminiscent of Siouxsie. Otherwise this was a herky jerky ride of good songs and other that fell flat to my ears. Very experimental in tempo, sound, and texture like an art school project. One thing is for sure - it sure is nice to hear a band that doesn't sound like every other thing out there today. (EA)

Troubleman Unlimited 16 Willow St. Bayonne, NJ 07002

**Esther Lee—Fifty Eight Now Nine, CD** Never is it a good sign when a CD has tracks labeled "prologue" and "epilogue." What's between the two is mostly mellow, one-guy-with-an-acoustic-guitar stuff. The vocals remind me of J. Mascis at times, which doesn't help this record's cause. (KR)

Sea Level Records, PO Box 291775, Los Angeles, CA 90029

**Euphoria - Tenth Anniversary Special, CD** For a political anti-war punk CD, it's kind of weird how it's an elaborate 3-song shaped CD. Very poor music with stupid lyrics and a bad sound collage for an intro. (RB)

VVAWI, Box 21604, Seattle, WA 98111-3604

♪ **Ex Models - Other Mathematics, CD** I guess that the post post punk age is now upon us, and I hope that the ex models are leading the charge. This has all of the energy needed to pull something ambitious like this off. The vocals are spewed forth in a spastic manner that would leave James Chance of the Contortions choking on his own smoke. The guitars cut and slice like Entertainment era Gang of Four. The bass and drums keep things herky jerky like the 'are we not men' Devo without becoming funky. Lyrically, it keeps the craziness going with obtuse lines that are either brilliant or bullshit. Finally something interesting came to me for review. You know, music that's challenging, not just a challenge to sit through an entire listen. This is highly recommended for those tired of Ramones retreads and boring emocore. My only complaint is that "The Birth Of Disneyland" borrows just a little too liberally from G of 4. (AS)

Ace Fu Records, PO Box 3388, Hoboken, NJ 07030

**The Exploders - New Variations, CD** Rock-n-roll hellfire with a shit-face grin. The lead singer looks like George "the animal" Steele with a big afro. There's a Dead Boys cover that I recognized, but this just isn't my thang. (JG)

Teenage USA Recordings- PO Box 91-689 Queen St. W, Toronto, ON M6J1E6

**Fastlane - Hold Your Breath, CD** "Break my heart again you piece of shit...Throw me in the sewer- Take a crap on my head..."- HA! I LOVE IT! Besides the beautiful lyrics, there's some real energetic compressed rockin' goin' on. Sounds could be comparable to Lifetime. (JG)

Fork In Hand Records, PO Box 230023, Boston, MA 02123

♪ **Flaspar - Erotic Jetplane Stylings, CD** I wish this didn't end up in my box, 'cuz I'm supposed to hate this stuff. But Cody Brant is a fucking genius. This is "grade A" experimental jokey crap that's brilliant despite itself. The mastermind behind this absurd sound is probably a big snoot— if you're going to put video game samples on a music CD and expect people to like it you must have an Atari cartridge or two up your ass, right? But this damn thing works!!! Computers, home experimental recordings, and Kraftwerk all have had a negative effect on music. But without any of the above we wouldn't have this remarkable CD. It'll lose you from time to time, but unlike most other techno-nerd guys this guy IS at least trying to make songs of sorts. Where he adds in voices and soliloquies about art and music, Brant crosses the line and Flaspar becomes just another pretentious experiment. But



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Czarnik (BC)

Proving it doesn't have to be old to be a classic this pop-punk gem came out in 1993. SICKO's "you can feel the love in this room" is solid. Something that doesn't happen a lot in this business. A record that contains great song one after the other. They are all classics and rock you like a hurricane. This Seattle three piece on Empty records put out record after record in the early to mid 90's and never got the national attention they deserved because everyone was stroking Green Day, Offspring and Rancid. Their sound is lead by trading off lead vocal guitar players. The guitar is rocking and the beats are fast and catchy. The lyrics are great like on "On the Clock" a great song about how work sucks. They even beef up the Indigo girl's "closer to Fine" on this record. I love it because on the cover the band is playing to a room of three people and when I saw them first it was in Chicago with myself, Pete Oblivion, and Denis (x-88 fingers Louie) watching them. The cover came true! Get this disc, as it should still be out there at many punk stores. IT RULES!

**TOP FIVE CD's THAT GOT ME THROUGH MY DIVORCE:** 1-Flogging Molly "Swagger", 2-Smoking Popes- "Destination Failure", 3-Twisted Sister- "Stay Hungry", 4-Sludgeworth- "Losers of the Year", 5-Muffs entire catalog!

where he mixes instruments, effects and sounds, he's creating intriguing and oddly emotional music. Yes, computer crap can be emotional. I really am pissed at this guy for getting me so into his tripe that I'm calling it emotional. I'll stop now. (AE)

Sour Cream and Velvet Records, PO Box 285, Las Vegas, NV 89145

**Foibles - Solid Rock...**, CD A kid that should have masturbated that night instead of making this wimpy crap. And this review is NOT because I am getting divorced and haven't been laid in months. (BC)

Crank & Rattle Records 2007A Golden Gate Ave. San Francisco, CA 94115

**Fracas - A New Host of Torment**, CD Yep, it sounds like it's from California and it is. Punk rock in today's vein that reminded me of Jughead's Revenge. Energetic with lots of focus on death and dying. "I gurgling on blood!" (AS)

Calendar of Death Records, 1431 A Park St., Alameda, CA 94501

**The Frisk - Rank Restraint**, CD Extremely repetitive punk rock. I didn't really get into this at all, it was a little too weak and the vocals seemed almost monotone at times. (RS)

**Fuck On the Beach - Endless Summer**, CD Japanese Banzai-Core!! Over a dozen songs in about 20 minutes. You do the math. Kids, this is what happens when you take too much ephedrine. Your weenie gets teeny, and you can't fuck on the beach!! (JG)

Slap A Ham, PO Box 420843, San Fran, CA 94142-0843

**Get Up Kids—Eudora**, CD So the Get Up Kids are releasing a retrospective of hard-to-find tracks and unreleased songs—that's got to be a record considering how long they've been together. Nevertheless, this has plenty of catchy powerpop songs that give you an understanding of why these guys are so popular. (KR)

Vagrant Records, PMB 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90403

**Godless Wicked Creeps - Smile**, CD Punk rock and roll with some country, Supersuckers and Monkees influences. Music for fat guys who roll their pants up and slick their hair back and still seem to get rad girlfriends. (NS)

Lucky Seven Records, diehardmusic.com

**Golden Gram - S/T**, CD Campy boy-girl rock with lots going on. 13 tunes of it in all. (BC)

Ojet Records PO Box 9802-242 Austin, TX 78757

**Grafton - s/t**, CD If Honkytonk Man, Hacksaw Jim Dugan and Mike Ness of Social D. got in a wrasslin' match...THIS is what it would sound like. If this picture I just painted in your mind arouses you, then you ought to buy this. Hurry up! The ref's not looking! (JG)

Deraille Records- PO Box 10276 Columbus, Ohio 43201

**Hawd Gankstuh Rappuhs MC's - Wake Up and Smell The Piss**, CD Worst piece of shit, hip-hop CD ever. I can never get that part of my life back again. (DM)

Load Records, PO Box 35 Providence, RI 02901

**Hirameka Hi-Fi - The Imperfect Approach/Self Starter**, 7" Two emo-pop songs featuring a real twangy guitar. Ho-hum...everybody seems so glum. Bullocks!!

Gringo Records, PO Box 3904, Clacton Essex, C015 5TF, England

**The Impossibles - Brick Bomb**, CD This is a good one from my new home state of Florida (sorry I didn't do a longer review for you all, but I am tired.) Rockin' sounds from Weezer to Fugazi, 4 good songs. (BC)

Fueled by Ramen Records PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

**Inside Conflict - Unearthed From Wonderland**, CD Evil noise-core from France. Sounds like Marilyn Manson's bony, bare ass sliding across a vinyl love seat. Pardon Moi' !! (JG)

Overcome Records, PO Box 80249- 35102 Rennes Cedex 3, France

**Into Ashes - If You Need a Reason**, CD New band on a new label plays a not so new sound, and they play it well. This Tallahassee emo-pop band with energy is agreeable and rockin'. And at least this CD EP is genuinely too long to fit on a 7". (AE)

Copter Crash Records, PO Box 6095, Hudson, FL 34667-3095

**Jack Palance Band - Get This Shit Under Way**, CD My time is worth money, and this CD is worth my time. Great punk rock from Chattanooga, TN bringing to mind the catchy rawness of Dillinger Four and Crimpshrine. (SY)

Attention Deficit Disorder, PO Box 8240, Tampa FL 33674

Joe Ninety - Lifetime of Empty Dreams, CD I generally hate catchy as fuck, polished punk rock with a few exceptions. I can do without the NOFX's, Lagwagon's, etc. Fuckinhateum. However, I always had this soft spot for 88 Fingers Louie. I don't know why, but whatever. With 88 FL gone, my hatred continued. ...UNTIL I heard the UK's Joe Ninety. I'm not saying they sound JUST like each other, but god-damn, the hatred stopped and I can go on with an aggressive, catchy as fuck punk band in my life. Maybe it's the number thing, the hooks, the "whoa whooooo's" and sing a longs or even the decent lyrics and presentation. I just don't know. The world may never know how many licks it takes to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop or why I dig these guys, but the world goes on and so do I. This is tops if you dig that sound. (DM)

Bombed Out Records, PO Box 17 Leeds, LS8 1up, UK

**JR Ewing - The Perfect Drama**, CD Design wise, this album makes me think I am about to listen to some arty rock. But wait, it is on



REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: (Mr)Dana Morse (DM)

Punk rock to me has been about breaking the mold. Whether it was going against the norm with music, styles, or most importantly, a different way of thinking. What am I getting at? Make way for the trailblazers and accept their efforts regardless of the genre of music. Just a couple of years back there was a hip-hop project called THEM featuring Doseone rocking the mic and a DJ by the name of Jel. This is the perfect music for those who yearn for honest music. Them provides poetic lyrics that don't rhyme, music that is unconventional for this genre, songs that are bringing a fresh breath back to rap. This sub-genre of avant-garde hip hop is brought to the listener by a collective called Anticon who puts out music by other artists going over peoples heads like Sole, Why?, Buck 65, Odd Nosdam and Sixtoo to name just a few. For those who are aware of this movement know this is just the tip of the iceberg. There is a whole world out there with hip-hopper's that are not trying to be high rollers that are worth your time and effort.

**On the turntable:** Owls, new Fugazi (and I like it this time), the Descendents part of the new All live album, System of a Down, the Bell Rays and the book Me Talk Pretty One Day by David Sedaris

Coalition, so it's hardcore and is real damn good. Not knocking the packaging, it just looks like all the other hip records out right now that push Photoshop to the minimal level. Musically, they bring back sounds of the young Gravity label in the early 90's. Heroin would be a fair comparison for sure. These guys are from Norway, and International hardcore should ALWAYS be of your interest. Americans, we just get boring after awhile... (SY)

Coalition Records, Newtonstraat 212, 2562 KW Den Haag THE NETHERLANDS

**Kidsnack - First Steps, CD** Ripping off the Smoking Popes and Parasites simultaneously while finding time in-between to pose for cute liner note photos. (RB)

Double Zero Records, PO Box 7122 Algonquin, IL 60102

**Kingsbury Manx - Restless Minds b/w Drift Off, 7"** There are some likable melancholy melodies on this, especially the b-side. The a-side is a little too mired in redundancy. Good 5am wondering why you're still awake music. (RB)

Sit-n-Spin Records, 302 Oak Ave, Carrboro, NC 27310

**Kitty Little - S/T, 7"** Cute lil' 3 piece playin' cute lil' sugar-coated pop-punk ditties. The lead singer has that cute lil' high voice goin' for him, kinda like Ean from Sicko. Yet definitely not Sicko. Not recommended, not-not recommended. (JG)

Peterwalkee Records- PO Box 14794 Albany, NY 12212

**Knut - Bastardiser, CD** I am suffering from the dropped tuning burnout. The lower the instruments get tuned, the sleepier I get. Not sure anymore if I am experiencing music or a sedative. From Switzerland, Knut keep it tortoise slow and heavy. Some break downs here and there, but definitely not enough riffs. They do pull off the HydraHead sound that is shared by many a band on the label, but Knut adds nothing to keep my interest. A great layout as all Hydra Head releases have. Maybe if I got some weed this might be appealing. (SY)

Hydra Head Records, PO Box 990248, Boston, MA 02199

**Lazy American Workers - Another Half-Assed Job Well Done, CD** A terrible name and an even worse layout made me want to write this CD off, but the music is too damn good. High-energy punk rock and a great recording make it impossible to ignore. With lyrical subject matter covering drinking, beautiful women, and feeling like shit, they got all bases covered. (SY)

Biscuit Scrubbers Records, PO Box 6487 Toledo, OH 43612

**Les Black's Amazing Pink Holes - We're Glad We Are What We Are (revisited), CD** Re-release of a great mid-80's punk rock and new wave album. Includes a New Years Eve live show and nine previously unreleased tracks that make this disc a bargain of fun rockin'. Hear the classic

"Proof is on the Pad." And a handful of others that reminds us of the non-political correct fun of the eighties. (EA)

Smog Veil Records PMB 454 774 Mays #10, IV, NV 89451

**Lickgoldensky - Enjoy Terror, CD** Short, chaotic, metally blasts. Think Dillinger Escape Plan, Botch and Hydrahead. Man, I got some diamonds in the rough. I'm not really too into this type of stuff, but they're definitely talented. I wouldn't kick them out of bed for snoring! (NS)

Hawthorne Street Records, PO Box 805353, Chicago, IL 60680

**Lost Kids - Belle Isle Is On Fire, CD** I can't figure out if the mod thing is back or a flash in the pan thing. Anywho, this is a pretentious garage rock EP trying to capture that feel of yesteryear. However, they do seem to embrace that darker feel with their music I believe they are attempting to achieve. Skinny, scary music for the kids. Dig it, daddy. (DM)

Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 178262 San Diego, CA 92177

**Lot Six, S/T - 7"** At times you perk up and think it's like old Samiam. Then it relapses back into something closer to Earth Crisis. What? Yeah, you guessed it, pretty much every moment of this can be easily filed. I always knew Massachusetts had a seedy underbelly. (RB)

Espo Records, PO Box 63, Allston, MA 02134

**Mark Mallman And Vermont - ST, CD** 2 dudes from the Promise Ring and 1 from Pele make up Vermont. And the other dude makes 4. I like those bands, but this is too mellow. It kind of sounds like SDRE's really slow stuff, but even more somber. (NS)

Guilt Ridden Pop, 2217 Nicollet Ave. South, Minneapolis, NM 55404

**Mary Tyler Morphine/Munition - Split CD** Mary Tyler Morphine play rough and speedy punk/hardcore. Somewhere in between. The singer's voice sounds familiar. Maybe a little like the singer of the Cranberries. The 5<sup>th</sup> song is a jam, with the girl singer singing, then the guy singer screaming and the 2 girls harmonizing, then back again. Munition treads common ground with Dillinger 4, Leatherface, Naked Raygun and the Still Little Fingers. I know that's lazy of me, but it's true, and it's a good thing. Chicago punk bands have always seemed to have a cool sound to them and both these bands are 2 more examples of Chicago's proud tradition. This CD also benefits the Chicago Coalition For The Homeless. I almost feel bad for getting it free. I could write more good things, but I'm under time constraints, so I'll just put a little asterisk up there signifying my endorsement of this fine punk musical compact disc. (NS)

Failed Experiment Records, www.failedexperimentrecords.com

**Me Infecto - Reality and All It's Friends, CD** One guy on bass, One guy on drums, this is Quasimodo-like punk rock. The vocals have a Jeckyl and Hyde personality, and the bass sounds like a bloodletting. They seem



### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Eric Action (EA)

It is time for possibly the best 7" of all time to be reviewed. With out a doubt the MINUTEMEN taught me that punk rock did not have to be as loud as Black Flag, or as crude as the Circle Jerks. Now there was dozens more bands that could have taught this lesson, but for me it was the Minutemen. Their double LP, *Double Nickels on the Dime* is my top record of all time, but their first EP is the focus of this rant. *Paranoid Time* released in 1980 contained seven songs that captured my interest in punk music. Already a heavy SST listener with favorites like Black Flag, Husker Du, Meat Puppets, Angst, etc., this 7" was the first to make me want to start a band and jam econo. In the short duration of less than seven minutes you get D. Boon's high pitched (non-distorted!) guitar, Mike Watts frenzied bottom end bass and George Hurley's jazz at 78rpm beats. On top of this, somehow the lyrics were both political in "Paranoid Chant" and personal such as in "Validation" and not preachy at the same time — and this is the draw of the Minutemen. They don't have the musicianship of their later releases, but the raw energy and excitement is overwhelming and it shows in a song like, "Joe McCarthy's Ghost." You can still get the single from SST, I believe in 7" and 10" variety, but I am going to also suggest a CD as well. If you pick up *Post Merse Vol. 3*, you will not only get the *Paranoid Time* single, but also the *Joy, Bean Spill, Tour Spiel* singles and the *Politics of Time* LP. Forty-six songs on one disc, what a god damn bargain. Listen to the song "Paranoid Chant" and see if you don't feel the same way today as D. Boon did when penning the lyrics, "I try to work and I keep thinking of world war three I try to talk to girls and I keep thinking of world war three the god damn six 'o clock news makes sure I keep thinking of world war three I got a mile of numbers and a ton of stats...."

One would find the White Stripes new LP, Pilot to Gunner, Johnny Thunders, lotsa Lyres, Verlaines old Lp's and the New Town Animals on my turntable lately.

to have a raw appeal, and I bet they would be interesting to see live. To quote the band, "It's better than a pile of shit." (JG)  
www.meinfecto.com

**Medicine Ball - Fresh Ape, CD** The "ingredients" listed on the back of the CD reads, "ape, firewater, rock", but they didn't list olestra because this is giving me the shits. Moody alterna-rock. This is grueling and I couldn't recommend this to a primate. (JG)  
www.rubicrecords.com

**Mend This Tear - Concept & Theory, CD** Six songs of slightly political emcore with grindcore screaming vocals. Pretty above average for this genre. I thought that it was going to be totally humorless until someone shouted "whoah" during the last track, thus finally making me smile. (AS)  
Positive Outlook Records, PO Box 233, Peterborough, PE4 6UB, England

**Moment - Songs For the Self Destructive, CD** Emo spastically paced between sweet and brutal. At times reminiscent of Get Up Kids, Hot Rod Circuit and Christie Front Drive, the taste lingers on like a strawberry chapstick kiss. The packaging is pretty hip and so are the involuntary hip thrusts. (JG)  
Espo Records- PO Box 63 Allston, MA 02134

**Mourningside- ...From Two Graves Back, CD** Goth-punk titty-twisting you to sing along with the boyz! The melodies are death-laced, and the anthems are paganistic baby! Oh yeah...there's also a photo of a hot nekkid chick in a death shroud, holding a shovel in a graveyard. Deep. (JG)  
Rodent Popsicle Records- PO Box 1143 Allston, MA 02134

**Natchez / Shakers & the Pine Hill Haints - Split, CD** NS play self described "snake handling music", and PHH play self described "Alabama ghost music". I describe it as knee-slapping mountain music. NS is laced with harmonica, dulcimer, and gut-busting 'YEE-HAW's. PHH sounds similar, but with an accordion. Now boot, scoot, and boogie! (JG)  
Arkam Records- no address

**Nerves - World of Gold, CD** One solid piece of punk rock. On their third attempt the Nerves are veering away from the classic Detroit and New York sound, but still keep it true. You may regret not listening to them

now, because in a few years after they break up, everyone will talk about them. (EA)  
Thrill Jockey PO Box 08038 Chicago, IL 60608

**New Town Animals - Is Your Radio Active?, CD** Thank you, thank you, this is exactly what I need. The opening of this disc has a fake radio search, ala "Rock 'n' Roll Radio." In it you hear pieces of Boys, Buzzcocks, Generation X, and more. This got me excited and the New Town Animals followed it up with great pop. Snotty vocals that enough sing-along choruses to make this a repeat player. Any band that can pen the lyrics, "last night you called me on the phone, you said come over cos you know I'm all alone," should either be inducted to the rock 'n' roll Hall of Shame of be considered a pop great. The clichés on this release are so obvious, but done so well that it is my party disc for the upcoming winter. Includes a lot of "baby" and "radio" sightings — just like any bubblegum should. Tour them with the Buzzcocks and the Figgs and I just may spring for a babysitter. (EA)  
Mint Records PO Box 3613 Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6

**N.N.Y. - Don't Happy Be Worry, LP** A definite SST influence here. 1 part BLAST! and 2 parts Minutemen, throw in some Rollins era Black Flag, and you got a pretty solid record. Great liner notes with many a good thing to say. (SY)  
Manufacture. Maximum Voice. Postfach 26, 04251 Leipzig GERMANY

**Nobodys—Less Hits, More Tits, CD** Well, you know what you're getting into here. Only a handful of the 20 songs here are over two minutes, and they're all about rockin', drinkin' and fuckin'. Would segue seamlessly with the likes of the Queens and Antiseen. No thanks. (KR)  
Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409,  
www.hopelessrecords.com.

**Nozzle - Winter, CD** More bar punk rock from Lucky Seven. Sounds like alt country mixed with light rock. (NS)  
Lucky Seven Records, diehardmusic.com

**The Odd Numbers—The Trials and Tribulations Of, CD** Pretty straightforward pop punk that can get garagey at times. Apparently this is my month to get bands who want to be the Queens, because here's another one that reminds me of them. (KR)  
Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707, www.coldfrontrecords.com



**REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Jason Gitzlaff (JG)**

**FANTOMAS- THE DIRECTOR'S CUT** If there's one person who's brain I'd love to pick...it would have to be Mike Patton. If his thought patterns are anything like the music he creates, it's a wonder he can keep his sanity. This modern day Mozart can sing a lullaby gently in your ear, whisk you away to beautiful dreamscapes, and then drag you naked through broken-glass filled nightmares. Mr. Patton now assembles a line-up comparable to Earth's Mighty Avengers of Avant-Rock. Dave Lombardo (formerly of Slayer), Buzz Osborne (of the Melvins), and Trevor Dunn (of Mr. Bungle) complete the super group. More powerful than a loco-motive, faster than a speeding bullet, and able to cross genre borders from lounge to death metal with the grace of a black alley cat. Fantomas constructs 15 tracks based on classic motion picture compositions. From the Godfather to Twin Peaks, it's all here, re-imagined completely and infectiously. Bestial chants have never been more melodic and so damn catchy. You know something ingeniously sinister is going on when you find yourself constantly humming the theme to Rosemary's Baby in-na-na your head.

**Remaining constant-** Fantomas, Blueline Medic, Jealous Sound- "Priceless" (demo), new Dag Nasty song "Incinerate", Pennywise-Land of the Free, anything Kevin Smith, experiencing Satanicide for the first time, and Morlun Vs. Spider-Man...Nuff said!

♪ **One Step Ahead - Fuel for the Fire, CD** The other day a Jr. High School girl shouted "punk's dead" at me from her school bus. True story. And I'm not even punk looking. Guess the band shirt I was wearing made the little critic realize what I was up to. If punk's dead, then this excellent diverse straight-ahead fast punk debut full-length from a pack of Boston youth must be a figment of my imagination. One Step Ahead wrote the songs on this CD over the course of the past four years and it shows. There is a bit too much silliness here and there (we didn't need another cover of "Brown Eyed Girl" guys), but this is overall a very nice and solid debut. I love their theme song and the backing vocals by the "Trash Pirate Oi Philharmonic" are quite effective. It seems to me that older sounding bands are on the decline in the emo era. There are lots of great newer sounds, but sometimes the more derivative bands are fun as well. Doesn't anyone listen to more than one kind of punk anymore???? (AE)

One Step Ahead c/o Timothy Schell, 45 Waterford Dr., Weymouth, MA 02188-1907

**Pavo/Rhythm Of Black Lines - The Post-Parlo Records Split CD Series, Split CD** Pavo play droning instrumental indie rock like Karate, but even more boring. Rhythm of Black Lines' 1<sup>st</sup> song sounds like background music for a slow motion surf scene in a movie or something. Their 2<sup>nd</sup> is a remix (blah) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> has singing and sounds like Ween. Nice handmade CD jacket though. (NS)

Post-Parlo Records, PMB 49121, Austin, TX 78765

**Peelander-Z - Rocket Gold Star, CD** These three weirdo's turn in some ludicrous pop on this CD. More Japanese punk that doesn't make sense and rocks marginally well. (RB)

Micro Music, 5-2-22-306, Daita, Setagayaku, Tokyo 03-3411-4924

**Pink & Brown - Final Foods, CD** Two guys. One pink. One brown. Really. Is this artsy? Or fartsy? I bet these guys are film students. Loud and all over the Steenbeck. (JG)

ToYo Records, PO Box 17090, Oakland, CA 94601

**Pioneer Disaster - Speed 500, 7"** Three country influenced punk ditties. Think Minutemen meeting Hank Williams. This is someone's cup o' tea, but it's just not my chai. (JG)

Speed Nebraska Records, PO Box 3103, Omaha, Nebr. 68103

**The Plath - ST, CD** The only good thing about this band is that the drummer is wearing a Chixdiggitt shirt. It's not terrible, but it doesn't really stand out. They do a Heavens To Betsy cover, so if you like them or bands from Olympia, you might like this. (NS)

Colossal Youth Music, www.theplath.com

**Preshure Point - A Fiction Better Than Reality, CD** Enjoyable youthful melodic hardcore with an intentionally misspelled word in their name. They just might hit it big. (AE)

Farway Records, 5 Hutton Place, St. Albert, AB, T8N 5W6 CANADA

**The Profits—Dying for Dollars, 7"** Super simple, fast punk rock with the usual screamed vocals lambasting the usual targets: corporations, the G.O.P., gentrification. The spirit is noble, but everything else is cliché and without charm. (KR)

The Profits, PO Box 1143, Boston, MA 02134, theprofits@punkrock.net

**The Propagumbhis - The Rise and Fall of Nothing Much at All, CD** I don't really understand horns in music, but this skacore release has plenty of them. A must for those that want to hear a ska version of "Sometimes Good Guys Don't Wear White". (AS)

Hermit Records, PO Box 309, Leeds, LS2 7AH, UK

♪ **The Prostitutes - S/T, CD** Holy releases, the Prostitutes and Pelado Records put together all of the Prostitutes releases and put them on one shiny compact disc. I only had two of their singles and was real excited to get this one in the mail. The singer for this band sounds so much like Mike Hudson of the Pagans that is eerie. That alone makes this disc worth picking up. Twenty-Five tracks of punk rock that rarely strays the two minute mark. I would even dare to say that this may as well be the Pagans transplanted to the 90's (when this stuff was originally released). I am amazed that this band wasn't more popular at the time. I believe that this release could make them the next Devil Dogs or Mummies, in the sense that they will become very popular after they aren't around any more. I wish that I had seen them live. The Prostitutes should be on you're a-list of bands to discover. Simple punk rock with great lead vocals to sing with is always the best combination. (EA)

Peldao Records 521 W. Wilson #C103 Dosta Mesa, CA 92627

**Psychotic Reaction - Last Train to Nowhere, CD** Nothing really different or unique... Just an all around good 18 track long CD. An average punk rock band with powercord heavy guitar and a fast drum beat. (RS)

**Quasi - Early Recordings, CD** Picture it, circa 1993, 1994. A group playing kind of noisy, jangley indie rock with inspiration from the likes of the Velvet Underground to Pavement but done to fit the band's own desired sound. Their sound has progressed from this point, but come one, come all. See where it all started. Or don't, I'm not your father. (DM)

Touch and Go Records, PO Box25520 Chicago, IL 60625



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Kyle Ryan (KR)

TREEPEOPLE—*SOMETHING VICIOUS FOR TOMORROW/TIME WHORE*. To all you infidels who proclaim Built to Spill "the Shit," I say, nay, look unto Doug Martsch's roots, and ye shall be saved. I speak of the Treepeople, and more specifically, I speak of the record *Something Vicious for Tomorrow/Time Whore*. Formed in the late '80s in Idaho of all places, the Treepeople rose from the ashes of a punk band called State of Confusion to dole out the ass-kickings for five years. They were in top form on *Something Vicious for Tomorrow*, which C/Z Records released in 1992 combined with an out-of-print EP called *Time Whore*. If you've never heard them, the Treepeople were the masters of the dueling guitar parts. I'm not talking about one playing power chords, the other playing some octave progression. These guys wrote unbelievably intricate, complementary guitar parts that could just blow you out of the water, as this record shows so well. The Treepeople drew from punk's energy and intensity and wrote great rock songs that showed their musical prowess without being obnoxious or self-indulgent. Some of the songs exhibit strains of "the Seattle sound" (slower pacing, vestiges of psychedelic, etc.), which was blowing up around the time this record came out, but the Treepeople were at their most potent when they picked up the pace. "Funnelhead," with its numerous parts, speedy tempo and catchy lyrics, belongs in the pantheon of great rock songs. It's the highlight of the record, a masterpiece. "Time Whore," another furiously paced and written Treepeople song, "Liquid Boy" and the great cover of the Smiths' "Big Mouth Strikes Again" help round out what is a phenomenal record. Martsch quit the band before the last record and later resurfaced with Built to Spill, but it is pure sacrilege to treat the Treepeople dismissively. Sing their praises with me.

I won't dismiss these, either: Fugazi, The Argument; Hey Mercedes, Everynight Fire Works; New End Original, Thriller; Sonic Youth, Daydream Nation; and Tenacious D, holmes!

**The Queers—Live in West Hollywood, CD** Since I was a lad in high school, I've tried to have an open mind about the Queers, yet I'm routinely reminded there's no reason to. If you're a fan, you'll like it. (KR)  
Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys CA 91409-7495

**Red Level Eleven—Fort Seduction, CD** This reminds me of the type of stuff I'd hear walking into the studio at my college radio station, KCOU. Light on the rock, this is dissonant stuff with girl vocals buried in the mix. Sorta Sonic Youth-ish. (KR)  
Self-released, redleveleven@hotmail.com

**Red Monkey – Gunpowder, Treason, and Plot, CD** I am probably supposed to like this, but I don't. Lacks everything I like in my music – punch, catches, hooks. It sounds flat, though a few tracks shine and did get my attention. Sorry about the bad review, but it if wasn't for the good girl vocals I my have had a hard time making it through this one. (EA)  
Troubleman Unlimited 16 Willow St. Bayonne, NJ 07002

**Running Riot - Monk's not Dead, CD** Rough vocaled punk rock that has its ups and very few downs. They somewhat remind me of Dropkick Murphys with their vocals. On top of that, they do a rad as hell cover of "We're not gonna take it". It was a shame that the CD ended so quickly. (RS)

**Sad Like Crazy - Love Songs to Death, CD** Lo-Fi jam sessions with male/female vocals trading off on many of the 22 tracks. Mostly pretty stuff. For some reason Cindy Lee Berryhill comes to mind. 73 minutes of love songs to sleep to. (JG)  
Ojet Records, PO Box 9802-242, Austin, TX 78757

☿ **San Geronimo—S/T, CDEP** Man, this has been a brutal month for reviews, so even something that's just mildly tolerable sounds like a chorus of heavenly hosts singing to me. But even if I had a stack of records that sounded like my favorite bands, I'd probably still like this record. It's put out by Coldfront, a label that tends to specialize in guitar-heavy supermelodic punk, which can be good but a bit generic. (See the review of *Not So Quiet on the Coldfront*.) On that comp, bands like Divit, Horace Pinker and All Systems Go add something to that sound to make them stick out, just like San Geronimo does both on that comp and on this EP. The band features ex-members of Lifetime, Jets to Brazil and Drowningman, which is a nice pedigree,

but "ex-members" bands can suck just as bad as four schmucks who haven't played a show in their lives. San Geronimo play that Coldfront brand of melodic punk that's at least tolerable, but the songs have enough spark to make them more than tolerable. That spark comes from all sides: nicely done vocals; a big guitar sound that spends a healthy amount of time straying from the typical power-chord mutes and octaves; nice chord progressions; and solid musicianship. Fans of Jimmy Eat World, Texas is the Reason, Samiam, Knapsack and the like would be into this band. It's a genuine pleasure to listen to this EP. (KR)

Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707

**Sand Which Is – Burn Right Through, CD** Starts out kind of promising but gets way too drawn out. Settles into a very mellow mode, swaying between hard and soft, but always boring. (RB)  
Big Crunch

**Satanic Surfers – Fragments and Fractions, CD** Vaguely decent songs laden in some pretty stupid superficial overtones. I'd have to say they're honest, though, in light of the pile of trash in the "already reviewed" stack. (RB)

Bad Taste Records, St. Södergatan 38, 222 23 Lund, SWEDEN

☿ **Scrotum Grinder – The Greatest Sonic Abomination Ever, CD** I still find it hard to believe that the singer is a girl and the guitarist is in Hankshaw. I remember seeing these guys play at Sound Idea one time and I remember the guitarist had a fake mustache and I remember that it was hot as balls and I remember that I liked them, despite the fact that they pretty much sounded like a wall of noise in that sweaty, cramped room. They kind of have that crusty metal His Hero Is Gone thing going on, but maybe a little more metally. I think what makes these guys and bands like HHIG so good is that they actually have a good sense of melody. Relatively speaking. They have cool lyrics too. They use words like sacrosanct, recalcitrance and panache! My favorite line is, "Nullify and depose the austere veneer of the incorporeal!!!" I have no idea what that means, but I love it! This is some well-played, powerful shit, plus they have an element of humor to boot! There's a nice Slapshot cover and the Prank layout is great. When I saw my pile of review material I expected a pile alright, but this was a nice surprise. My dad says it sounds like noise though. What an old fuddy duddy. (NS)

Prank Records, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Neal Shah (NS)

So here's how it's going to go down. 20 current bands will be allowed to tour and put out records. All other bands will quit. And all old bands will reform and do reunion tours. I don't care if the band members are fat and bald, have become born again Christian Republicans, or if they're dead. They will do one tour when it's convenient to me, then they will go back to their shitty new bands, their shitty jobs, their shitty drug problems or their shitty families. What they will not do is record new albums. Ahem, Dag Nasty and Faction. But I digress. I just saw RKL and they ruled. Man, the singer is huge now! Not like back in the "Rock N Roll Nightmare" days. Yeah, yeah. All the 17 year olds swear by "Keep Laughing" ever since they heard it last month, Rock N Roll rips and it's still in print. Every band that copied NOFX owes this band for starting the crazy time change hardcore that influenced NOFX too. It's too bad that punk has such a problem with progression. The crazy dual guitars on this album rule so much. And the bassist is a madman. "Scab On My Brain," "Sargasm," "Seeing You." All classics. And the comic book insert! Bands don't offer us comic books anymore! They think we're old cranks, by gum!

**Listening to:** Holier Than Thou?, Sommerset, Pegboy, Wehrmacht, McRad, Capture The Flag, Life Sentence.

**Seldom—Places I Haven't Seen, CDEP** Mellow and mostly acoustic without percussion, this is sleepytime music. The songs seem to be crafted relatively well, but it drags after a while. (KR)

Casa Recording Co., 4509 Interlake Ave. N., #305, Seattle, WA 98108

**Seltzer - S/T, CD** Tight, pop-laced emo-core. The choruses are catchy, and chocked full o' NA-NA-NA's, grunts-N-growls, and YEAH-YEAH-YEAH's. Reminiscent of Samiam or Jawbreaker. This CD has really grown on me. Another Swedish recommendation from me. (JG)

Dogbreath Records, Kornettgatan 21D, SE- 73834 Norberg, Sweden

**Seville—Waiting in Seville, CDEP** At times I want to like this, but mostly I don't. This isn't easily quantifiable because it can be dissonant and poppy and straightforward, but it doesn't seem to work. (KR)

Fiddler Records, no contact information given

**Shotwell/Miami - Geneva Avenue Fallout, CD** This is a must have of the anyone who likes Mission Street bands—too many to list really and you know who they are. This here is a re-release of the split LP of Miami and Shotwell. Very reminiscent of the Crimpshrine era that everyone seemed to love. (EA)

Mission Records 2263 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

**Silver Tongued Devil / Crime Kaisers - Split, 7"** Silver Tongued Devil plays some Motorhead sounding tunes. Coincidence the first song is titled 'Lemmy'? I think not. Crime Kaisers rock out as well, yet come off a little more catchy to me. Their second song even has this spooky, 80's tinted keyboard to it. Not a bad piece of vinyl. (JG)

Green Hell Records, Von-Steuben-Str. 17, 48143 Muenster, Germany

♫ **Skabs, The - Aged To Perfection, CD** What the fuck? First impression: These guys have funny song titles and lyrics. Second impression: The Skabs? Sounds like a ska band name. Then I listened to them. Which brings us back to what the fuck? Imagine the Dickies mixed with Erasure mixed with Euro pop mixed with new wave. I'd say the only thing punk about this is that the singer sounds like a cross between Chi Pig from SNFU and the Dickies' singer. It's pretty fucking weird, but it's sort of catchy. They have plenty of keyboards, synth-sounding drums and some unique vocals. Plus they have funny songs like I Hate White People, Taste The Noose and Political Flatulence. And the singer says funny things like "well-to-do," "hunky-dory" "higgledy-piggledy" and "Washed out trendy, you offend me. Wash out your pussy!" What century is she from? I could picture her dressed up like a court jester or a loveable English fop. These guys should play with the Faint, but they'd probably scare the audience. I don't know if I'll ever listen to this again, but it definitely deserves props for being weird and original. (NS)

Mad At The World Records, PO Box 5216, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

**The Sky Corvair - Unsafe At Any Speed, CD** Previously released stuff from 94 through 97. Emo, Emo, Emo. Lots of soft/hard and stop/start parts. (AS)

Divot, PO Box 14061, Chicago, IL 60614-0061

**Slumber Party - Psychedelicate, CD** Girl power group Kill Rock Stars style. Their second release and even better, a little more formulated in the good way. I like Slumber Party in the same way I like my Shangri-Las, it is sweet stuff. (EA)

Kill Rock Stars PO Box 418, 120 NE State Ave. Olympia, WA 98501

♫ **Small Brown Bike / Cursive - Split, 7"** The first installment of the new Makoto Recordings Split 7" series. Small Brown Bike and Cursive give up two brand new songs. The bike song is musically and lyrically reminiscent of a song that might have appeared on the "Our Own Wars" album. The song revolves around a melodic guitar riff with a great rhythm section backing it up, and the usual gruff melodic vocals. Cursive keeps it short and sweet, playing noisier and faster than their usual chill mode. This 7" has a great and minimal layout that looks like it took 30 minutes to design, but it probably only took fifteen. Supposedly all records in this series will have this simple design. Simple, yet effective for distinction. Another part of this series calls for each band in the liner notes to describe the worst thing they have ever done. I guess both bands here think their shit doesn't stink because all we get here are some private jokes that aren't even funny. Totally lame. Make sure to pick up installment two of the series with Lovesick and Aloha writing some good stories of the worst things they have ever done. (SY)

Makoto Recordings, PO Box 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005

♫ **Spickle - ST, CD** Wow. I'm getting some unexpected surprises this issue. Sort of like a mud dig. I guess looks are deceiving, because from the layout of Spickle's CD, I thought they were going to be some crappy bar punk band or something. The layout is a little generic, but the music is pretty fucking good. Am I just being unusually nice this month? Well, I did kind of let the zines have it. Anyways, these guys play some rockin' instrumentals. I'm not mostly one to really pay attention to drumming, but the drumming really stands out with these guys. Not that it overshadows anything else. It's just good. All the instruments sound really good though. I don't know who to compare them too. They're heavier than Don Caballero. There are some metal Champs moments, but they're way more diverse. The song I'm listening to now reminds me of Nomeansno. They kind of have that post hardcore feel, but they make up for the lack of singing with really cool melodies and lots of rhythmic variance. I hate when I have to write stuff like that. But that's my only complaint with this band. Come on, guys. Don't make me look in the thesaurus for words. (NS)

Berserker Records, [www.berserkerrecords.com](http://www.berserkerrecords.com)



### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Ryan Batkie (RB)

Calvin Johnson and friends just breezed through town. It was a hilarious and beautiful and spontaneous show that gave everyone so much more than the usual sore legs from standing around staring and drew so much more from us the audience than the usual guilt trip applause. It was great. It threw some new light on the music of Calvin Johnson that I already have loved but almost forgot. I got home from the show and dove back into Beat Happening and the Halo Benders. Every single one of those two bands' records come highly recommended. But more specifically, BEAT HAPPENING's "Jamboree" LP is the classic base that would be a great place to start. When punk rock got very dreary in the mid-80s and super lame hardcore music and testosterone was dripping from almost everything, three folks in Washington were laying some serious groundwork and showing what DIY and punk rock was really about. There was no formula for anger here; only the idea that you should get up and make whatever noise makes sense to you. Do it honestly and it'll work. The first album was a wonderful and simple collage of naïve images. For Jamboree, the songs got stronger and more diverse. A lot of classic tunes are on that album. My personal favorite albums are "Dreamy" by Beat Happening and The Halo Benders' "The Rebel's Not In"; but again, EVERY record is wonderful. They're all available separately from K as is the new "Crashing Through" box set! Check it out.

**Keepin' me company through the lonely Philadelphia summer:** Ted Leo & Rx live, Radon, "Trompe le Monde", Phil Ochs, Fay Wray, Billie Holiday, Allen Ginsberg, Yah Mos LP, Radon, ohhhh....sweet Radon. PS - Leatherface's "Mush" is one of the most overlooked albums of all time.

♫ **Sportfuck - S/T, CDEP** You get so many releases here that all sport bad band names, album covers, music, etc. Rarely does one have one or just two of those qualities, but typically it's all three combined. Sportfuck makes up for the two more easily forgettable faults by generating some good scrappy alternative rock. This quartet keeps just enough punk flavor to their mellow musings to keep these old ears satisfied. I am reminded of so many great bands while listening to this. Dinosaur Jr., Yo La Tengo, beat happening, Smoking Popes, Galaxie 500, and Sonic Youth just to name too many. And then smack dab in the middle of the six tracks, they let the female vocalist take over and give us a great cutesy punk number that sounds dead on Shonen Knife. This group may not have that ever elusive secret ingredient X, but they make up for in healthy doses of musical vitamins A and B. Glad to have it brighten up my miserable days. (AS)  
31-74 37th Street, Astoria, NY 11103

**Stairwell - Pacific Standard Time, CD** Smiley California crap. Perfect soundtrack for the church wakeboarding club events! (RB)  
Takehold Records, PO Box 19831, Birmingham, AL 35219

♫ **Strike Anywhere - Change Is A Sound, CD** During the mid 80's, when hardcore became too tough, Dag Nasty came along, took hardcore and made it melodic. They even taught us how to be emotional. Through the decades, countless bands have come along, each one slowly weakening and destroying the genre. At this point with melodic hardcore you got nothing but jock-punk kicking out weak tunes about girls. Strike Anywhere will destroy the apathy that all of us in our mid 20's now feel towards this "kids" genre. The songs are tight with heavy guitars and the lyrics are so damn honest and heartfelt that you can't help but listen and think. Much like the tradition of 7 Seconds, the music is very sing-a-long and energy charged. Seeing the live performance of Strike Anywhere, I expected a lot from this record and I am not let down. (SY)  
Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington, DE 19810

**Strong Come Ons - Trailer Sessions, 7"** Aggressive garage-punk from Wisconsin that sounds pretty sweaty. Strained vocals and descent gee-tar solos melt the vinyl. On Wisconsin! You rah-rah! (JG)  
pleasureunitrecords@hotmail.com

**Superchinchillarescuemission—S/T, CDEP** Fast. Something tells me I shouldn't really like this, but this melodic blend of speedy melodic punk with screamed vocals is doing it for me right now. Nothing new at all but powerful & catchy. (KR)  
Attention Deficit Disorder, PO Box 8240, Tampa, FL 33674

**Superstitions Of the Sky - Things Said In Passing, CD** Beautifully played dual guitar work with a decent pair of vocals to match. It's almost as if the Get Up Kids became a duo, then went acoustic, but continued to play upbeat, catchy tunes. Not a waste of time by any means if this sounds appealing. (DM)

Robodog Records, c/o J. Jakubowski, 215 Cannon Rd. Freehold, NJ 07728

**The Tank - Demonstrating Potential, CD** Five catchy radio ready pop songs. Good, but overall, the thing reeks of some kind of professionalism that makes me a little sick. (AS)  
1070 N. Batavia #129, Orange, CA 92867

**Teresa Banks Profiles - These Binary Days Are Numbered, 7"** A likely and very unwanted marriage of digital synth babble and privileged white boy hardcore breakdowns. More clever talk of hacker terrorism that does nothing to inspire. (RB)  
Corporate Records, PO Box 19309, Houston, TX 77224-9309

**Thistle - Oxygen, CD** Massive guitars punctuate the four lumbering songs on this EP. After sitting down and listening with the lyrics in hand, it kinda grew on me. To quote them "with heartache and guitars". (AS)  
Tiberius Records, 4280 Catalpa Dr., Independence, KY 41051

**Thou - Put Us in Tune, CD** It's almost too cute at times, but fine pop music bordering on grown-up sounding. Inventive in the instruments it uses and catchy. (RB)  
SeeThru Broadcasting

**Three Minute Poetry - Slowly Learning That Love is Okay, CD** Catchless alternative rock with ups and downs and dealing with love, I guess. I just wish that the great many bands doing this type of stuff could instill some "fun" into it. (AS)  
Defiance Records, Rittstr. 52, 50668 Köln, Germany

**Tidal - Moment, CD** Quality screamed emo-hardcore from Germany with wild high-pitched backing vocals. Drink out of cans, not bottles if you see 'em live. Those vocals could easily shatter glass. (AE)  
Stickfigure, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308

♫ **Toxic Narcotic / A Global Threat - The Split, 7"** The first MRR to come out since the events of 09/11/01 had the phrase "still apolitical?" scrawled on the cover. While I can sympathize with the sentiment that to be apolitical is to be apathetic, I couldn't help but see the MRR cover as a cheap jibe at apolitical punk. Going out and actually burning flags



**REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Ryan Soucy (RS)**

**KNOWLEDGE: A GIFT BEFORE I GO** Nick Trainia (formerly of Link 80 and Knowledge) is truly one of the greatest poets of all time. With similar views to Operation Ivy, this peace punk hardcore band can really get their message across. This band has crazy amounts of energy and lyrics that would make even Bin Laden plea for peace. The hardcore vocals were some of the best and most talented I've ever heard because you can actually feel their anger. The CD starts off with rage and then grabs you by the neck and whips you through loops of anger, peace, happiness, and in the end complete sadness. I think it's really hard to find a band that can actually make you feel the way the song is meant to be, that is what makes Knowledge such a great band. No matter what kind of music you listen to, this one is really with giving a listen.

is far more entertaining than listening to songs about burning flags. Always has been. Political punk can be great, but so can apolitical punk. And that's what I see this important record as: the best damn apolitical street punk your 7" spending budget can get you this month. Toxic Narcotic's been around for about 12 or so years and they've recorded one street punk hit after another. Both of their songs here, "Asshole" and "Shut the Fuck Up," are fast sing-along numbers that you can apply to whomever your enemies might be. T.N.'s showing no signs of slowing down, and these two songs are as great as anything they've done (although I must say I haven't heard the live set on their DVD, yes DVD, yet). A Global Threat plays similar fast straightforward street punk, and this time sings about working ("On the Clock") and how fucking lame this nation is ("Better Than You"). The most political verse on the record is by A Global Threat: "Prick party tool, go suck off the cruel, status slime, and being us is soon a crime." Now That's political! (AE)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134

☞ **Tracy + the Plastics - Muscler's Guide to Videonics, CD** I've been awaiting the true second coming of good new wave for a while. I welcome it with open arms. What an unfair way to start this review, because it's obvious Tracy would have created this beautiful monster no matter what time frame or context the rest of us are caught up in. This album is thin, gingerly treading along the top of a ridge hundreds of feet above the average rock doldrums. The skeleton is exposed and every moment of sound is presented to you on a platter. That's not to say you're expected to make sense of it. While my mind finds it easy to love this, my soul has a much harder time. It's a fierce piece of art, but it will never make you tap your toes or sing along. So it's a true success, for this was indeed the purpose. Just before it gets too long and drawn out, it drifts away without warning or "good-bye". In many ways this is the flip-side of the Faint. Rather than a horde of males striking the pose, this is one woman walking an ingenious walk. Rather than luring you in with a dark sense of beat, Tracy dares you to get closer, offering you nothing you would sensibly want. You'll never get the true experience simply from the album, though. Get out and see this live. (RB)

Chainsaw, POB 1151, Olympia, WA 98507-1151

**Trassels - S/T, 7"** This heavy rock will tickle your melody fancy. Power chords as thick as the vinyl. (RB)

Killer Records, PO Box 237, 28101 Pori, Finland

**Travoltas—Teenbeat, CD** If Blink-182 were from the Netherlands, this is how they would sound—but even Blink writes songs with more to them than this. Similar to Queers. (KR)

Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707

**Tune in Tokyo - Make Me Eternal, CD** First full-length from this Texas goof hardcore band with ex-members of Carbomb, Sap, and The

Primadonnas. These guys want to rock and mainly succeed. (AE)  
Buddy System Records, 302 Bedford Ave. Box 284, Brooklyn, NY 11211

**The Uniform - Black and Vain, CD** Ho-hum bluesy rock. The songs are kind of annoying and redundant. If that background vocal chirps in my ear one more time I'm pulling out my BB gun. (JG)  
Morphius Records- PO Box 13474 Baltimore, MD 21203

**Vanilla Pod - Third Time Lucky, CD** More competently executed melodic punk rock. Beautifully executed so that all of the songs are nearly interchangeable. Pure nineties style. (AS)  
Deck Cheese Records, 49 Muswell Hill, London N10 3PN, UK

**Wafflehouse / For Dire Life Sake - split CD** Wafflehouse put forth some painfully lackluster music they want to believe is intense. For Dire Life Sake at least tries to make real metal music, but it's so weak. Avoid this CD. (RB)

Forge Again Records, 2109 n. Kenmore apt. 1F, Chicago, IL 60614

**The Wednesdays - Fury, CD** If Boris the Sprinkler were an 80's trash rock band like L.A. Guns it might sound a bit like this. If this band were a taste, it would be a cross between Kentucky Fried Chicken washed down with 10 cent Pabst Blue Ribbon. A shitty dive band, not necessarily in a bad way. (JG)  
Arkam Records- no address

**When We Die - S/T, CDEP** Playing music backwards, demonically garbled vocals, and pictures of human innards = some evil punk rockers! The guitar work is notably wicked...as in evil AND cool, man! With only 4 songs, it's not enough music to give a recommendation though. (JG)  
"e-mail your bullshit to : [www.13@prodigy.net](mailto:www.13@prodigy.net)"

**Words For Snow - S/T, CD EP** A two song EP that comes across real strong with a Fugazi influence. I'd be curious to see a full length from these guys. They keep their songs short lyrically but go off with noise jams that are worthy of note. (SY)  
[www.wordforsnow.com](http://www.wordforsnow.com) (Only contact address given)

☞ **Yellowcard - One For the Kids, CD** At first I was a little hesitant about the looks of this CD. One of the members in the band looks like this guy I got into numerous fist-fights with back in the ole stomping grounds of Eastside Milwaukee. After paging through the booklet, to my relief his name wasn't 'Clayton'. More yet, I discovered I really enjoy this disc! Yet another strong release from Lobster Records. Yellowcard throw in every trick from the west-coast pop punk book, and then some. Thick chunky guitar ala Junction 18 or Saves the Day, to teary eyed slo-jams perfect to drink Irish whiskey all by yourself to. Did I mention there is a violinist in this band? I mean, even on the JAMS!! Take my word, it's different... yet enjoyable...like pineapple on pizza. Am I a big pussy for liking this? (JG)  
Lobster Records, PO Box 1473 Santa Barbara, CA 93102



### REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Scott Yahtzee (SY)

I just moved into a new place in Chicago, and as I perform the routine of hanging up my posters and such, I am listening to the questionably legit *Lost & Found* CD of the CITIZENS ARREST discography. What a great fuckin' band. And I think to myself, how many people found Citizens Arrest? Maybe they sold 5000 records? Maybe 1000, maybe 500? I don't know these things. There are definitely not enough copies of their flexi floating around to appear on Ebay when I would have the money to buy it. And just because Asshole Parade did a Citizens Arrest cover on their first 7", I suppose that doesn't equate to mass recognition for the band amongst the hardcore kids. Doing a quick reality check among my roommates, I return with a survey equal to zero. Citizens Arrest existed in the NYC hardcore scene around the same time as Born Against and shares a similar sound. They did all their time at Don Fury's studio and the recordings sound intense. The only thing easily available is the "Colossus" LP on Wardance/ Tribal War, which is amazing. If you can find the 7" and flexi material, get those too! If time machines were reality and my life was fantasy, seeing Citizens Arrest would be at the top of the list, right after the Minutemen in 1984, Rites Of Spring in 1985 and Black Sabbath in the year 1970...

**Playing through my speakers this month...** The Second Story Window LP, Misfits - "12 Hits From Hell" (fucking Danzig recalled this ???!) Gang Of Four "Peel Sessions", Anthrax "Among the Living", Mission of Burma "Forget" and the Argentina "Diving Board" CD.

**V/A—Later That Same Year...**, CD This CD reads like a Very Small compilation or at least the type of stuff I was listening to around 1992. Fuel, Blatz, Good Grief, Schlöng, Anger Means, Downfall, Fifteen, Paxton Quiggly, Monsula, Spitboy...all that's missing is 23 More Minutes, Plaid Retina and Econochrist. There are 34 friggin' tracks here, and sadly, many of them sound like they were recorded on a boombox (many of them are live tracks), then digitized and burned onto a CD. Nostalgia and production preferences aside, this is a pretty eclectic collection that accompanies a large zine in the liner notes. Honestly, a lot of it is bad (just like a Very Small compilation), but it has its moments of catchiness: Fuzzzone, Good Grief, Downfall. Doing a cover of "Caroline" by Jawbreaker, like Fifteen did, gets a gold star in my book just because that song's awesome. Or Blatz's "Berkeley is My Body And I Want to Kill It" works because of the title and, well, it's Blatz. I can't imagine this record costs much, and you'll get quite a bang for you buck regardless. Put this on and smile. (KR)

S.P.A.M. Records, PO Box 21588, El Sobrante, CA 94802-1588

**V/A—Les Pauls and Breaking Glass**, CD With a label name like Sin City, you can guess you're gonna get some dirty rock 'n' roll, and bands like Toilet Boys, Dead Boys, American Heartbreak and Electric Frankenstein provide that. Some kick ass. Others, um, do not. (KR)

Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707, [www.coldfrontrecords.com](http://www.coldfrontrecords.com)

**V/A - Living Tomorrow Today (a benefit for Ty Cambra)**, CD This is important. EVERYONE READING THIS GET THIS CD! We are all into punk to be better people right? Well this is actually a CD where the money will go to help a sick kid with a rare disease, so do it to make you feel good, and to prove that we have hearts and not are just a bunch of self righteous losers who are to stupid to be on major record labels anyway. You get songs from The Lawrence Arms, Face to Face, Tuesday, Alkaline Trio, Saves The Day and a ton more! (BC)

Asian Man Records PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

**V/A - New Disorder Records Comp**, CD 25 bands covering much musical ground on this disc. Featuring J Church, The Cost, The Lab Rats, The Sidekicks, and other "The" bands. (BC)

New Disorder Records 115 Bartlett St. San Francisco, CA. 94110

**V/A—Not So Quiet on the Coldfront**, CD Lots of catchy, melodic punk with plenty o' power. Twenty-eight tracks, but these stand out: Divit, Horace Pinker, All Systems Go. Some of it's pretty generic. (KR)

Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707, [www.coldfrontrecords.com](http://www.coldfrontrecords.com)

**V/A - The Rebirthing: A Tribute to Samhain, 2x7"** It is indeed a cash cow attempt by a meager label, but I dig this stuff enough to get past that. Recommended for the deeper cuts they were willing to put forth. Hit & miss to say the least. (RB)

Spasthmatic Records, PO Box 20913, Mesa, AZ 85277-0913

**V/A - The Seed of the Next Season** German hardcore comp, with an emphasis on hardcore with emo and metal influences. Lots of high quality bands you've never heard of. (AE)

Stickfigure, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308

**V/A - Skins & Pinz: Volume II**, CD This is an amazing comp filled with tracks from some of the best Oi/ Street bands around. Includes tracks from Anti-Heros, A Global Threat, The Krays, and Agnostic Front. This CD is loud, angry and has tons of energy... Defiantly a must check if this is your type of music. (RS)

**V/A - Urban Guerrilla Zine- Compilation #1**, CD This is a comp of hard shit featuring over 20 bands from around the globe. And why yes, it does have the band "Shit Loads of Fuckall from Canada. (BC)

Urban Guerrilla Zine/ DisRecords PMB 419, 1442A Walnut Street, Berkeley, CA. 94709

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# > DOGHOUSE RECORDS 2002

*digital blue skies for 2002*



## > RIVER CITY HIGH

*Won't Turn Down* CD (Dog085)



## > AS FRIENDS RUST

*Won* LP/CD (Dog084)



## > SCOTT RITCHER

*Nashville Geographic* CD (Dog086)



## > SUNDAY DRIVER

*Third Place Prize* MCD (Dog083)



## > FAVEZ / SCOTT RITCHER / TIME SPENT DRIVING

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# Punk Rock Times

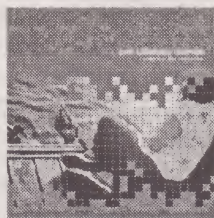
Your monthly source for  
new punk rock releases



## The Deadlines

*Fashion Over Function*

Urgent, glamorous, jet-setting Rock and Roll tearing at its own skin.  
Tooth and Nail / TND1210 out: 11/20/01



## The Lyndsay Diaries

*Remember the Memories*

Heartfelt, honest, & acoustic. Scott strips it down and bares his soul.  
The Militia Group / TMG002 out now!



## De La Hoya

*Dance! Techno Mega-mix Vol. 42*

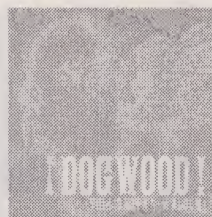
Melodic mix of Hardcore and Punk blurs lines between political and personal.  
Red Leader / RLR-6 out now!



## Nobodys

*Less Hits, More Tits*

Brand New 21 song full length filled with undiluted four-chord Ramones-inspired punk rock anthems mixed with Stogies style Rock n Roll.  
Hopeless / HR059 out: 11/27/01



## Dogwood

*This Is Not a New Album*

12 tracks of California melodic Hardcore/Punk. Many say their best release yet!  
Facedown / FRD16 out now!



## Rise Against

*The Unraveling*

Chicago's new hardcore! Featuring ex-members of 88 Fingers Louie.  
FAT / FAT 628 out now!



## Kosher

*Self Control*

A hard hitting debut of thought provoking songs! Fans of D4, check it out!  
BYO / BYO075 out: 11/27/01



## Son Of Sam

*Songs From The Earth*

Blending punk, metal & goth featuring members of A.F.L., Danzig, Samhain, Tiger Army  
Nitro / NIT 15840 out now!

#20 - December 2001

★★★ for a complete list of punk rock times stores go to [www.punkrocktimes.com](http://www.punkrocktimes.com) ★★★

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PAPER

# ZINES



## ARA Research Bulletin #1

This is a news collection for awareness from the Anti-Fascist Research Analysis of the evils of the nazi regime and fascist movements that exist in North America. This collection of writings can be used as a handbook on some of the National Front and what has been done to try and stop their efforts. There are also other previous events and movements recorded to help the reader see what hurdles are in the way to be pro-active in the stopping of fascism and the evils that exist. If you have any interest in this or a need to know, this is a great start and worth supporting. (DM)

\$10/4 issues, year sub. PO Box 403 1658 N. Milwaukee Chicago, IL 60647

## Arise!

Another great punk newspaper style zine. Get active, get informed, get Arise! (RB)

2441 Lyndale Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55405

## Ben's Little Zine

A pocket-sized personal zine put out by someone who has time to kill and hates personal zines. Our self-loathing writer presents an honest attempt at writing anecdotes, poetry and personal feelings. He should have kept to just the hating. (DM)

Stamped envelope, c/o Ben Jaques, 316 Kirkwood Dr. Chapel Hill, NC 27514

## Boy/Girl #3

The third installment of this great split zine. One half is obviously boy while the flipside is girl. I actually liked the girl side better this time around (the opposite of #2). Maybe girls are just more interesting to us boys. It does allow everyone to read both sides of the gender issue and that is exactly the focus of most of the writing. This isn't for the music fan, but the zine fan. Thick, easy layout, and nothing to

preachy makes this a fast read. You have seen this kind of thing a few dozen times, but if it ain't broken, don't fix it. (EA)

\$3 pod PO Box 743 Mankato, MN 56002

## Burn Collector #11

Al Burian, now writes for Punk Planet as well, is such an interesting character. I have fond memories playing on a bill several times with his old band Hellbender and later seeing Milemarker. Besides being a great musician and crafty singer, Al is a great writer. Burn Collector is a staple when it comes to great reading in the zine world. Discussing his (and every punkers) move to Chicago changes the scenery. This is a must get for any journal like readers, really. (EA)

\$4 pod Stickfigure PO Box 55462 Atlanta, GA 30308

## Chaque Jour (formerly Cryptic Slaughter) #17

Starting out slowly, this zine evolves into a very funny story involving the painstaking process of organizing a local punk show. In fact, I thought it was very Kevin Smith-esque and would be great as a screenplay. Topics revolve around community, capitalism and benefits of a workers union. 3 or 4 of the characters in this story deserved a kick to their necks, if you ask me. (JG)

PO Box 1781, Spokane, Washington Territory, 99210 USA

## The Cheese Stands Alone #1

A self-described "Cut & paste personal zine." I honestly think that people deserve some credit for putting these kinds of things out, but not much.

Please, Punk Planet, no more zines. (NS)

\$1 + 1 stamp, Franco, 400 Park Rd., Parsippany, NJ 07054-1737

## Cigar Punk #1

While I could care less about cigars, it's nice to see a zine have a purpose and serve that purpose well. The reviews are thoughtful and good, as is the cover story on Georgia's issues with the confederate flag. This zine bears the mark of an old prideful hillbilly punker. (RB)

\$1, PO Box 767572, Roswell, GA 30076

## City

This tiny little comic book (tiny meaning barely bigger than a business card) is pretty neat. It tells the story of some sort of creature being blown into a big, gross city. Although the themes are pretty predictable, the illustrations are nice, and it's a quick, enjoyable read. (KR)

50 cents, PO Box 771402, Lakewood, OH 44107

## Erotographamania

This is a very addicting read. Like a reality show this zine keeps you watching and then wonder, "Why the hell did I just read this?" The thick journal is nothing more than the letters written back and forth between a girl from Pittsburgh and a drummer on tour from Ireland. After an apparent one-night stand, he actually writes her while continuing his tour and through the series of letters you get to know and love the two characters and their friends. If this was fiction, it would be brilliant. Since it is not fiction, it feels awkward reading the process of falling in love from letters that were not meant to originally be read and published in a zine. (EA)

erotographamania@hotmail.com

## Extra, Issue 39

Pretty cool and slightly commercial looking music fanzine out of Japan, but unfortunately I couldn't read anything other than the band names. Appears to have articles on Saves The Day, Tiger Army, and lots of Japanese bands. (AS)

email Takaya at extra@diskunion.co.jp



## **EyeBall, Spring 2001**

This is a nicely done "magazine" devoted to zines, comics, microcinema, and multimedia. Has articles on Clamor Magazine, Jordan Crane of Non comics, a couple of low budget film makers, and some movie, comics, and zine reviews. This seems like a must for anyone interested in non music related underground media. Makes me want to go make a film. (AS)

PO Box 21141, Oklahoma City, OK 73156

## **Fula Fula Hula Hoop, 7?**

Quick read zine proving my suspicion that soon everyone will have done a zine. Maybe it will soon be a mandatory school learning thing. A personal type zine. (AS)

2117 East 14th St., Bremerton, WA 98310

## **Gumlift #1**

It looks like this guy was just lying on his bed one night, remembering a trip to St. Louis, then decided to do a zine about it. He's in Puerto Rico, so he talks about how much it sucks then goes into his trip to St. Louis. But it looks like he ran out of motivation, so the story just kind of craps out and degenerates into bad drawings and a poem about shit. Well, you have to start somewhere. (KR)

Free. Eric Pena, HCOI Box 15731, Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, 00623, gumlift@tumpeto.com

## **Hey Bastard, Listen to This #2**

Five short 'coming of age' stories. Adventures in acquiring cheap beer, consuming cheap beer, and divine intervention on the behalf of cheap beer. A colorful cast of characters that you won't find on the Real World. A true slice of punk rock Americana. Well written and attention grabbing. Perfect for my daily subway commute. (JG)

25 cents & a stamp, c/o Pete, 502 S. 49th St., Philadelphia, PA 19143

## **How2 Zine**

This is an awesome resource for how to do tons of stuff...yourself! Great pictures and diagrams on how to build, grow, and generally accomplish anything. Fix your toilet, develop photos, make wine... Most stuff is reprinted from other publications. Everything is good. You need this to survive. (RB)

Couple bucks to PO Box 14523, Richmond, VA 23221

## **I Hate This Part Of Texas #2**

I don't like zines. I keep telling PP not to send them and guess what they do? They defy my orders! Curses! But this one wasn't that bad. I read it on the autogyro and I enjoyed it. A little bit of Crimethinc (maybe a tiny bit) and a little bit of Cometbus, although I've never really read Cometbus. The writing style looks similar. This zine is about a dude who likes to travel and have fun and drink alcohol that people throw away. He tells us how to conserve water. He writes personal stories that aren't boring. He's got some interesting things to say. He likes folk music though. He must be one of them lesbians. (NS)

\$1 + 2 stamps, PO Box 251766, Little Rock, AR 72225

## **In Till Stumps #2**

Detailed and informative zine on the Greater Brisbane HC punk scene. The local aussie lingo shines through refreshingly poetic. Lots of thoughts, music/zine/show reviews and interviews. A must if your in the area. (JG)

PO Box 668, Booval DC QLD 4304, Australia- \$1/\$2 world

## **Inquisition #3**

"Your Non-Corporate anti-plutocratic independent guide to the modern day World" is what the cover proclaims. It's got an interview with Fifteen, some bad poems and articles about censorship, suicide, sweatshops, Napster, lucid dreaming and other young punk concerns. I'm glad to see that he cares about stuff. It almost makes me wish that I did too! (NS)

\$1, Nick Finc, 5 Woodhouse Way, Washington, NJ 07882

## **Insomniac**

Here's a project next time you can't sleep: Go out and document your city, as this guy did with San Francisco. This is a well-written collection of the by-products of insomnia. The way he writes about S.F. reminds me of Kerouac and other residents of the city that's so prominent in poetry and stuff like this. Definitely check it out. (KR)

\$2, Tapil, 492 Grove St., Apt. 20, San Francisco, CA 94102, kyezine@yahoo.com

## **International Playboy #1**

An alright attempt at a zine. There's a brief interview with Tiltwheel, an effort to explain why so many hate MRR and Earth Crisis and why our writer hates

Bob Dylan. A redeeming quality to this zine is a open forum debate column where readers can write in and debate about previous topics. There's only room for improvement here with a decent beginning. (DM)

3696 Broadway PMB 103 North Bend, OR 97459

## **Jaded in Chicago #12**

Quick read, filled with many ads and a few good interviews. This time around you get Propagandhi, Hot Water Music, The Stereo and more. Also, a Blue Meanies tour diary that was rather interesting for a band I care nothing about. Sprinkle in a few records reviews, some more ads and you have Jaded in Chicago. (EA)

www.jadedinchicago.com

## **Liar Liar #1?**

Random writings from travel journals with an unknown band. While she embraces the various communities of punk, and her love of music, she also comes off as 'lost' and too self-analytical at times. While having some interesting comments on punk rock, she shares too much redundant information and I am bored. For such an interesting road trip, I'm just not sure she had any 'fun'. (JG)

Sara- 6107 43rd St., Riverdale, MD 20737 - donation or stamps

## **Lightning Bug Zine #3**

A super-quick read that acts as a eulogy for a dead bamboo plant. It makes you think of the countless dead plants you've left in your own wake. I would say more, but there's nothing else to this, unless it's some kind of metaphor for society. Hopefully it's not. (KR)

\$1 Kirstin M.E. Munro, PO Box 65, Saratoga CA 95071

## **Lightning Bug Zine #4**

Short and heartfelt, this early California memoir reads pleasant and smooth. I like zines like these...coherent and palm-sized. (JG)

Kirsten M.E. Munro- PO Box 3824 Portland, OR 97208- \$1

## **Mr. Peabody's Soiled Trousers, #12**

A day by day diary of editor Jason's life events for the month of April. I think that this is the way that some people communicate today. No need to write letters or phone, just wait for your friends' zines to come out to catch up on their going ons. Also has some zine reviews. (AS)

Jason Koivu, PO Box 931333, Los Angeles, CA 90093



### My Ex-Boyfriend is a Communist #1

Somebody kick me in my fucking neck. Pompous whining from a teenage-minded twenty something, who is way too neurotic about high school memories, finding a job (even though she doesn't need one), and her boring ass personal life. I'm sure somebody likes you...but I wouldn't want to know them. I picture you a real life 'Cathy' cartoon...and that scares me! Oh the Humanity!! (JG)

\$1, c/o Laura, PO Box 915, Hyannis, MA 02601

### O.J. Killed Elvis #5

With the American flag emblazoned on this zine's cover, I expected the usual leftist claptrap, but this zine was devoted to a road trip (via Greyhound) from New York to Oregon. You're bound to pick up a few good stories along the way, as he does. But it's annoying when people complain about having no money & nothing to eat then talk about procuring a bag of pot. (KR)

No price given. 252 Grand Ave., Apt. 1, Johnson City, N.Y. 13790

### Punkanot #2

64 pages. He calls this a short story, but it's just a long, dull journal entry about traveling. 64 pages and not one mention of shitting, farting, drinking or nakedness. That's what traveling is all about! This is why I hate DIY. Stop doing it yourself! Don't do anything! And what's with the MRR quote about your last issue, "Oh my. This is a gem." Even my roommate Jack wouldn't say something as fruity as that. (NS)

\$2, Wylie Punkanot, PO Box 540304, Houston, TX 77254-0304

### Punks Git Cut! #5

Surprisingly beautiful gibberish and funny drawings tattoo this zine like a high school notebook. Humorous rants on Pokemon to Pamela Anderson. My favorite was definitely the exploding vibrator story. Extremely immature and ask me if I love it...I do. Fun stuff. (JG)

\$1, no address given- too bad

### Restless #1

A great road trip zine from a girl in Mass-a-chutes-its. Or whatever that state is. Road trips are the best! She does a fine and dandy job in jotting down her trip as well as draws some cool cartoon people. (BC)

\$1 Laura, PO Box 915, Hyannis, MA 02601

### Retail Whore, #4

Another diary type zine detailing the writer's getting fucked up on all kinds of stuff and hanging out in Chicago. Forty pages. (AS)

K. Raz, 5741 N. Ridge #3ne, Chicago, IL 60660

### Riot Grrrl Montreal. #?

A serious collection of short stories, "How to" sections on power chords and starting your own record label, and a look at sexist issues in contemporary society. A female empowerment zine which is definitely powerful, yet lacks an overall maturity. (JG)

No price, St. Laurent 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Montreal, QC Canada, H2X2T3

### Second Guess #16

Dude, you were in Zoinks! An intelligent zine with personal thoughts, an article on vegetarianism that actually covers different ground, an article on the writer's attention disorder, an article about how anger is bad for punk and some other writings. Some of his writing seems a little disjointed and confusing at times, but overall, it's a pretty interesting read. (NS)

\$3.50, PO Box 9382, Reno, NV 89507-9382

### Sore #12

A nicely laid out zine, mostly made up of short stories and some personal accounts/thoughts. Some are annoying, some are interesting. Some are callipygous. Yeah, go look it up! There are some record and zine reviews and a little piece about a band called The Lot Six. I can't wait for #13! (NS)

\$1, Sore Zine, PO Box, Virginia Beach, VA 23471

### Soup for the Revolution

This is such a great idea: a zine that gives vegetarian & vegan recipes with a side order of politics. You know, I love the hey-this-is-my-life-let-me-tell-you-about-it-in-detail variety of zines as much as the next guy, but it's always a pleasure to get something like this that aims to do more than the average zine. It has snacks, breakfasts, main dishes and desserts—everything you could need and all of it cruelty-free. You get your usual anti-consumerism fare here as well, but the recipes are great. I plan to hold onto this for future reference. (KR)

\$3, Justyn Stahl, 1703 Seminole Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035, xxjustynxx@aol.com

### Spider Stompin' #5

"Lily Goes to College." Mostly hollow anecdotes from a northwestern gal. Parts threaten to get interesting, but it's so short it can never pick up much steam. Mostly complaining about people deemed lame, which is a punk zine prerequisite, but only comes off as elitist and boring. (RB)

Lily Boe, 410 E. Denny Way #257, Seattle, WA 98122

### Straint #3

They talk about body hair and summer holidays. I have to go feed my cat, but this zine looks good enough to get. (BC)

\$1 Lane Van Ham 220 E. 15<sup>th</sup> St. Tucson, AZ 85701

### Sunshine From Darkness: World of Hurt #1

Rotoscope-like doodles and a reoccurring theme of time being 'relative', this zine chronicles the authors 'growing pains'. He comes off as very anti-social and suicidal, and I just want to say "relax". Aesthetically, this is a very creative package. The somberness is what is getting on my nerves. (JG)

PO Box- 821 Valley Stream, NY 11582

### The Tenth Frame #4

A step by step illustrated zine to accompany a 1947 live performance of Thelonious Monk. The music is interpreted by the drawings. The artwork is doodle-ish, yet intricate in detailing specific sounds to symbols. Comes complete with a burned Thelonious Monk single "In Walked Bud". Obviously a lot of hard work, but I'm not quite sure why. Maybe you should turn this passion into another type of energy? Whatever makes you happy. (JG)

\$1, c/o Austin English, PO Box 460584, San Francisco, CA 94146-0584

### We Ain't Got No Car! #6

Do not never use a double negative in your writing punks.. Go back to grammar 101. Well this zine comes from a former PP reviewer so it must be good because you have to be the best to be involved with Punk... what was I talking about. Anyway, this is a zine of personal accounts and rants that are interesting to read. (BC)

\$2 or Trade PO Box 3824 Portland, OR 97208

Have a zine? Want it reviewed? Send it to:

Punk Planet Reviews

PO Box 6014 East Lansing, MI 48826



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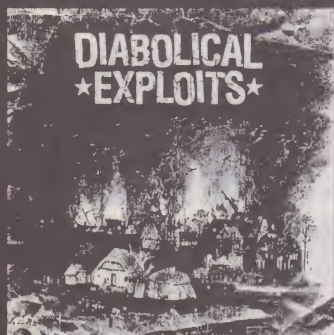
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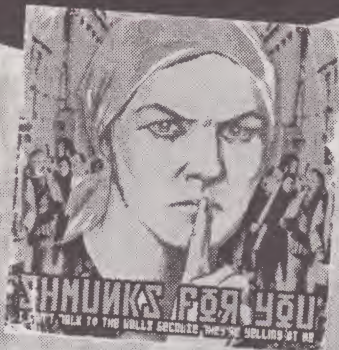
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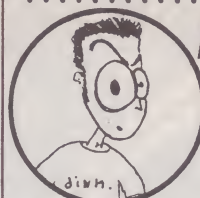
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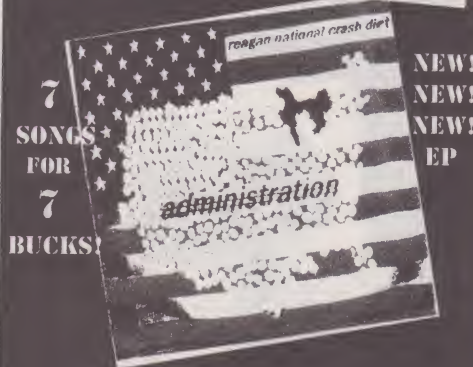
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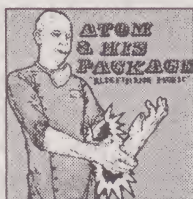


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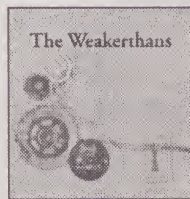
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## Amped: Notes from a Go-Nowhere Punk Band

By Jon Resh  
Viper Press

I never suspected that Henry Rollins would inadvertently start a whole sub-genre of music writing with *Get In The Van*. I really wanted to hate Jon Resh's entry into the fray, a rather sophomoric romp through the adventures of his band Spoke in the early '90s. But Resh has written a rather entertaining, if somewhat self-righteous romp through punk rock's total codification as a rite of passage during this period. Like *Get In The Van*, *Amped* is both a memoir and a monograph, as irritating as it is informative. At a time when a number of writers are attempting to provide a historical spin on this era—take for example Michael Azeraad's nostalgic *This Band Could Be Your Life* and Charles Cross's Kitty Kelly-like tell all biography of Kurt Cobain, *Heavier Than Heaven*—*Amped* gives us a much needed insider's perspective that Resh's better funded rock journalist brethren sorely lack.

Resh self-deprecatingly describes himself as being "endowed with a voice that sounds like a cavity-ridden muffler attached to the anus of a flatulent walrus." His description of Florida's inhabitants rings true: "Floridians have accustomed themselves to this nasty vermin [the cockroach] as just another of the Sunshine State's rogue inhabitants, not so different from its serial killers, native shit-kickers, oblivious tourists, faux-mermaids, cocaine kingpins, moron surfers, nouveau-riche snowbirds, spooky clairvoyants and Jimmy Buffet wanna-be's." This sort of quasi-suburban

white-trash realism pervades the better parts of *Amped*, leading to the sort of guilty pleasure one might expect of the readers of a James Ellroy novel or the viewer of certain mainstream Hollywood mind-popcorn.

In Walterboro, South Carolina, we meet Priscilla, a "self-proclaimed Jewish-American princess turned chicken farmer." Resh skillfully captures the insanity of her stream of consciousness monologue:

"Last-night-my-two-little-monsters-my-little-boys-I-mean-I'm-always-calling-them-monsters-they-was-creeping-under-the-house-looking-for-some-brass-knuckles-my-older-son . . ."

After a gleefully enthusiastic description of an Avail gig, Resh finds himself verbally assailed by a local hipster. When a young lady finds out that he is working on a book about Spoke's touring, she laughs and says, "More fucking suburban white boys trying to write how fucking important punk rock is." These types of remarks keep check on some of the more self-righteous and self-conscious portions of the book.

When it came to his own band, Resh states that people in Gainesville's scene tagged Spoke as an "emo" band. "We played 'sincere' punk with noisy, aggressive pop leanings, influenced by Husker Du, Embrace, early Dag Nasty, Gray Matter and the undisputed progenitors of the emocore genre, Rites of Spring," Resh explains. "If that made us 'emo,' fine. Since emocore itself wasn't yet codified—there was no absolute emo sound, style of dress or any real aesthetic manifesto, at least not in Florida, we didn't care." After this descent into self-consciousness, Resh

proceeds to trash Hoover: "In Hoover, I was seeing a package of emo clichés that would later grow into a burgeoning musical and subcultural category, inevitably caricaturing and diluting itself."

Such silly denunciations do not obscure how intimately *Amped* captures many neglected aspects of everyday life in the punk community during the early '90s. If anything, these weaknesses help underline much of this book's authenticity as a first-person document written by an artist trying to figure out where they stood during an extremely awkward period in rock and roll history. —Bill Mithoefer

## Beneath the Paving Stones: Situationists and the Beach, May 1968

Texts collected by Dark Star  
AK Press/Dark Star

Returning to this book in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, my initial resistance to its charms was overcome. The writers of the pamphlets reprinted here would surely have avoided the perfunctory expressions of mourning. No, they would have boldly stated that the twin towers' flame-out is the perfect metaphor for a society of the spectacle being beaten at its own game. And that captures what is good and bad in this volume. It reflects the daring of the heterodox French leftists responsible for the events of May, 1968. But it also showcases their refusal to make the compromises necessary for their movement's long-term survival.

Hardest to understand from our vantage point is the hatred these tracts express



for unions. "The stronger the Labour Movement, with its bone-hard hierarchies and its schoolteacher notions of technology and social justice, the greater the guarantee of total repression." This quote from "The Poverty of Student Life," a tract distributed by Situationists at the University of Strasbourg in 1966, testifies to the movement's tendency to think in absolute terms. While these harsh words make more sense if you understand the role that the Communist Party played in controlling French unions, they still reflect a disturbing tendency to throw the baby out with the bathwater. However benighted their leadership may have been, union members did not have the luxury to be "as radical as reality." Unlike most of the students spearheading the movement, they had families to support and jobs they couldn't afford to lose.

Taken with the right dose of realism, however, this book can be a wonderful resource. It's amazing how little the big picture has changed. At one point, the authors of the Strasbourg pamphlet speak of the challenge to the Left posed by the "decline of the spectacular antagonisms (Tory/Labour, East/West, High Culture/Low Culture)." This is a politics for after the Cold War. "The market has once central principle—the loss of self in the aimless and unconscious creation of a world beyond the control of its creators." In a sense, these tracts heed their own suggestion that "revolution must break with its past, and derive all its poetry from the future." Their future is our present, a time when world trade takes precedence over everything else.

Not surprisingly, the most powerful piece in the volume is the one least constrained by the specifics of the French situation, Raoul Vaneigem's "The Totality for Kids." His dissection of everyday life under "advanced" capitalism retains an urgency that transcends the fixation on May, 1968 as a concept. "The spectacle and

everyday life coexist in the reign of equal values. People and things are interchangeable." Watching coverage of the World Trade Center's demise, you couldn't help but wonder whether some of us found it easier to mourn the building than the people inside it. "Who is responsible? Who should be shot? We are dominated by a system, an abstract form." Stockbrokers are people too. —Charlie Bertsch

**Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy**  
By Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, Editors.  
Routledge

The first morning I sat down to review the latest literature on the Black Panther Party, the Oakland Tribune featured a story on the latest project to emerge from the Huey P. Newton Foundation: a Panther clothing line. David Hilliard—the man who literally replaced Newton as Party head when Huey was jailed, and figuratively replaced him as executive director of his memorial foundation—is pictured smiling in Panther hat and t-shirt.

According to the article, shirts shipped in May, with sweatshirts to follow in late July for back-to-school marketing. A company representative at Fresh Jive, the clothing's manufacturer, explained, "Normally, you have to spend time 'building an image,' but the Panthers already have one, and this is clothing with a message." Hilliard added, "We always wore clothing that made a statement, and now we want clothing to educate young people."

This position—the liberation pedagogy of clothing—is one of the few omitted from this reader, which makes a fascinating effort to read the Black Panther Party through the concerns of a 21st century Left. The result is a heterodox collection of essays that for-

sakes clear ideological agreement, to admit a startling array of perspectives that testify to the Panthers' continued hold over the popular Left's imagination.

So it is that the memories of Yippie Stew Albert, self-proclaimed "official best white friend of the Black Panther Party," co-exist uneasily with tactical criticisms of the Panthers' alliances with white activists. So it is that Kathleen Cleaver's line on sexism and the Party—that its gender relations be analyzed in the context of "what was going on in the world," not segregated from the sexism of society at large—is later followed by Erika Doss's interrogation of "the dick thing" in Emory Douglas's Party art.

While some readers might find these conflicting viewpoints confusing, and hunger for a concluding essay to synthesize the book's observations, the editors have found an inclusive ethic that befits a Party that claimed only 5,000 members near its peak, yet reached millions more through its publications, service programs, and media profile. What the Party was depends on where, how, and when you interacted with it, and the book puts equal weight on the Panthers's "global solidarity" and its internal, regional variations.

Rejecting the scholarly convention that "the Newton-led Oakland Panthers were the 'real' Panthers," the book gives a great sense of the range and diversity within the movement. The end result is a reader that manages to rise above the self-defensiveness and internecine squabbling of the Left, to advance a new critical understanding of a signature historical movement. In particular, the book's "global/local" analysis and its emphasis on dismantling the image of a Party centrally coordinated from Oakland, to examine how Party chapters actually operated and lived, implicitly suggests that the organizational forms of the 21st century Left are not as new as commonly believed. ©

—Aaron Shuman

All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to plunk a needle down on a record and write a snappy capsule. If you'd like to have your book reviewed in Punk Planet, please mail it to: Punk Planet attn: Book Reviews PO Box 464 Chicago IL 60690 if you want anything else reviewed, please mail it to the reviews address given at the front of the magazine.



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## As The Sun Sets : *Each individual Voice...* : CD

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## *Each individual Voice...* : Reviews

Categorization is proved irrelevant ... punishing and intense ... heavy as hell ... would put the aforementioned bands to shame ... far too metal for me.

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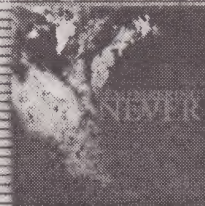
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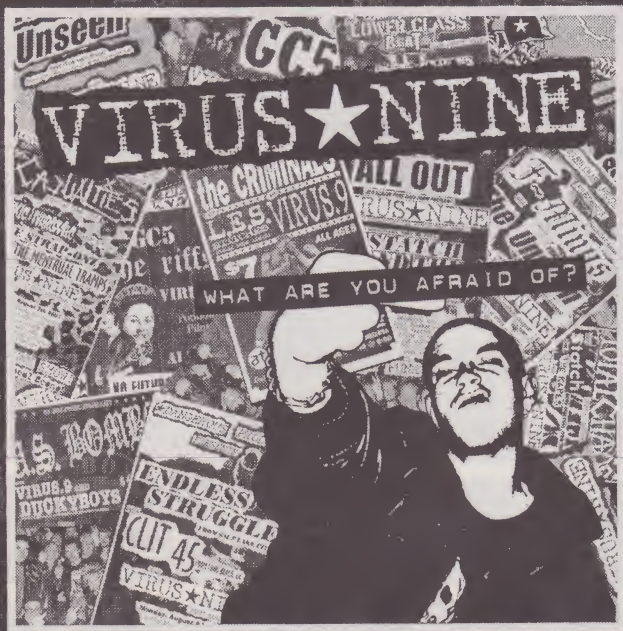
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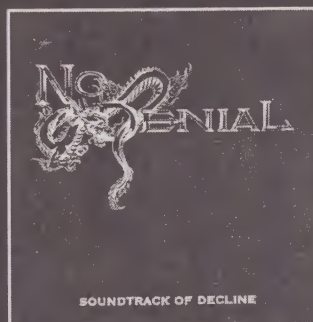


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**PP34** Nov/Dec 1999 takes an in-depth look at THE WARPED TOUR. PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue, Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REPLICANTS, CADILLACA, OPERATION IVY'S JESSE MICHAELS, and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more—except for reviews, which were missing from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

**PP35** Jan/Feb 2000 the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER, the frontman of punk legends THE CLASH. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNGFISH. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEED, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE, the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE'S DR. FRANK, the mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE DC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more. 152 pgs

**PP36** March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PUNK IN AMARILLO TEXAS. Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interviews with MATADOR RECORDS, THE COUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS COOPER, AT THE DRIVE IN, TAPE OP MAGAZINE, LIMPWREST and SARGE'S ELIZABETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs

**PP37** May/June 2000 CRIME AND JUSTICE 2000. In three articles,

PP37 takes a look at the sorry state of the American criminal justice system. POLICE BRUTALITY is looked at in the article "War in the Streets." YOUTH ORGANIZING AROUND PROPOSITION 21 is investigated in "No Power like the Youth" and the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX is exposed in "Crisis and Control." Interviews in this issue include STELLA MARRS; J-CHURCH'S LANCE HAHN; STEPHEN DUNCOMBE, author of ZINES AND THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE CULTURE; the EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE; Q AND NOT U; EXHUMED FILMS; HORACE PINKER; and the story of STALAG 13, a Philadelphia-based punk club that was shut down by the city, fought to be reopened and won. Finally, PP37 takes a look at the SAD STATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE and PP takes a peek at the lawsuit between the RECORDING INDUSTRY OF AMERICA AND MP3.COM. Plus more. 144 pgs.

**PP38** July/August 2000 VOICES OF THE NEW LEFT. PP takes a look at the new anti-globalism movement. Interviewed in the "Voices" series are NOAM CHOMSKY, JELLO BIAFRA, DIRECT ACTION NETWORK, RUCKUS SOCIETY, QUEER TO THE LEFT and GLOBAL EXCHANGE. Also interviewed in this issue, BOY SETS FIRE, UNWOUND talk about building their new recording studio, post-hardcore label HYDRAHEAD RECORDS, controversial publisher SOFT SKULL BOOKS, MELVINS bassist Joe Preston talks about his project THE THRONES, electronic artist LESSER checks in and art rockers LES SAVY FAV yap at you. Also, PP38 takes a look at the growing RAPTIVIST movement. Additionally, PP38 looks at the GROWING ANTI-WALMART MOVEMENT. Much more. 156 pgs.

**PP39** Sept/Oct 2000 Six years after punk "broke" into the mainstream, Punk Planet talks to many of the bands involved, GREEN DAY, JAWBREAKER, JAWBOX, SAMIAM, GIRLS AGAINST BOYS, THE SMOKING POPE, FACE TO FACE, JIMMY EAT WORLD, TEXAS IS THE REASON. Think you know what happened? Think again. Also in this issue: interviews with KILL ROCK STARS founder

SLIM MOON, THE EXPLOSION; MARY TIMONY; SUE COE; ULTRA-RED; DIS-INFO.COM; and the CENTRAL OHIO ABORTION ACCESS FUND. Articles in this issue include a look at how groups like the WTO ARE EFFECTING THE LIVES OF THE GREAT APES; a report on the CHICAGO POST-ROCK SCENE; and noted economist Doug Henwood writes "BOOM FOR WHOM" which puts a new perspective on the "new" economy. 152 pgs

**PP40** November/December '00. MEET THE NEW BOSS Through interviews with controversial biographers, Punk Planet #40 envisions the hell that the Bush presidency will be—and the hell that a Gore presidency would have been. PP40 also features interviews with INSOUND.COM; The Fucking Champs' TIM GREEN; ELECTRICAL AUDIO; Anarchist theorist JOHN ZERZAN; MARCELLE DIALLO; VERSO BOOKS; MILEMARKER; and MATMOS. Articles in PP40 include a look at the WAR THE GOVERNMENT IS WAGING AGAINST THE NAVAJO INDIANS in Big Mountain, AZ, the PLIGHT OF C NUMBER PRISONERS IN ILLINOIS and a look back at WELFARE REFORM. 152 pgs.

**PP41** February 2000 PUTTING DC ON THE MAP. PP41 takes a look at the history of the DC punk scene. From the influence of the Bad Brains to the birth of Minor Threat; from a violent Ian MacKaye to a not-yet-Rollins Henry Garfield. PP41 offers a revealing and detailed look into punk's past. Interviews in pp41 include: (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY, THE WIPERS, THE LOCUST, TNI BOOKS, and DIY reggae pioneers RAS RECORDS. Articles in PP41 include a look at POETRY SLAMS and a devastating look at the BOMBING OF A COLOMBIAN VILLAGE. Additionally in PP41 is an inspiring talk with SUE MECCA, a 40-year-old punk rock mom. Plus, DIY tips, columns, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs.

**PP42** FINDING LIFE ON DEATH ROW Too often the story of state killing has been told through statistics—these unique conversations with three people who have been to death row (two are still there) bring readers beyond the numbers and into the cell itself.

Interviews in this issue include: AMPHETAMINE REPTILE RECORDS calls it quits, SAMIAM, JETS TO BRAZIL'S JEREMY CHATELAIN talks about his solo work, filmmaker ANDREW DICKSON, members of the powerful Seattle band THE GITS look back at the death of their singer Mia, and hip-hop culture mag BLU keeps it real. Also interviewed in PP42 is ALI ABUNIMAH, a young Palestinian activist who has helped turn the media tide during the latest Arab uprising in Israel. Articles in PP42 include a look at the growing anti-psychiatry movement—are drug companies convincing us we're sick in order to turn a profit. The revealing DIARY OF A PHONE SEX WORKER lets readers peer into the world on the other side of the receiver. And PEDAL POWER chronicle's one woman's travels into the radical pro-bike movement. PP42 also includes all the columns, reviews, DIY and more that you've loved over the years. 136 pgs.

**PP43** BECOME THE MEDIA PP43's 36 page cover section gives readers DIY tips on how to edit digital video, how to set up a low-power radio station, how to record audio, how to program HTML, how to build a web-based audio feed, how to shoot video, how to program Flash animations and much, much more. In addition to those tips BECOME THE MEDIA also looks at the history of the INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER, who are setting the media world on end. BECOME THE MEDIA also features pieces about YOUTH MEDIA, the ZAPATISTAS AND TECHNOLOGY, NEWSREEL, and COMMUNITY ACTIVIST TECHNOLOGY. This issue is a must have for anyone interested in the new media revolution. Also featured in PP43 are interviews with radical historian HOWARD ZINN, rockers ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT (fresh off being dumped from a major label), "emo diaries" kingpin DEEP ELM RECORDS, author SHAWNA KENNY, who wrote I WAS A TEENAGE DOMINATRIX, laptop rocker KID 606, religious zealots THE CAUSEY WAY, and the masterminds behind the PUPPET STREET PROJECT. Additionally, PP43 features all the stuff readers have come to expect over the last

seven years: columns, reviews, and much more. 144 pgs.

**PP44** THE WEAKERTHANS, one of the finest punk outfits to come along in the last few years grace the cover of PP44. This interview, performed by longtime Punk Planet contributor Larry Livermore, probes the mind of Weakertans frontman JOHN SAMSON. In their conversation, Livermore and Samson go from poetry to revolution and back again. Truly an engaging and inspiring talk with one of punk's newest heroes. Also interviewed in this issue: MR LADY RECORDS is profiled through talks with the label owners and the artists they release; futuristic hip-hop duo DELTRON 3030; Pacific Northwest metal punk LORDS OF LIGHTSPEED; electronic music pioneer THOMAS DIMUZIO; HALF JAPANESE's legendary JAD FAIR; Pacific Northwest politi-rockers THE INTIMA; and \$5 CD label PLAN-IT-X RECORDS. Articles this issue include: UNIVERSAL RECORD'S ACQUISITION OF E-MUSIC—it may not sound all that exciting, but this business-section errata finds many independent labels not so independent anymore; reporter Heather Haddon looks at the ABUSE OF FEMALE PRISONERS IN AMERICA; new associate editor Chris Ziegler gives a hilarious behind-the-scenes look at SOUTH BY SOUTH-WEST; PP investigates SLAUGHTER OF WILD BUFFALO IN MONTANA; and PUNKS REMEMBER JOEY RAMONE in a moving tribute. All this, plus all the DIY, columns, reviews, and much much much more! 144 pgs.

**PP45** features a special DOUBLE FEATURE cover story! This issue not only shines the spotlight on consumer-rights activist, 2000 presidential candidate, and all-around hellraiser RALPH NADER, but it also features an in-depth interview with uncompromising independents SHELLAC. Just for you, PP45 serves up a little double trouble—two cover stories for the price of one! Also interviewed in this issue: Latino punk entertainer EL VEZ; author PLESANT GEHMAN; analog electronic rockers MOUSE ON MARS; the new band to emerge from the ashes of Smart Went Crazy, THE

BEAUTY PILL; queer zinemaker RUDY SCUTTER; filmmaker STEPHANIE BLACK; and independent country-rockers and death-penalty activist STEVE EARL. Articles in this issue include a hair-raising look at THE YAZOO BACKWATER PUMP PROJECT IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA—these pumps, if built, could bring environmental devastation to this fragile region; BACK TO SHATILLA follows author Ali Abunimah as he visits a Palestinian refugee camp; and HONDURAS: THE OTHER COLUMBIA looks at the US's secret involvement in the Honduran government's war against its own people. Plus columns, reviews, DIY and much, much more! 144 pgs

**PP46** ART & DESIGN 2! This issue picks up where 1998's popular issue left off, by covering the known and unknown artists and designers working in and around the underground. As with the previous art & design issue, PP46 features FOUR LIMITED EDITION COVERS this time by artists JAIME HERNANDEZ (LOVE & ROCKETS COMICS), SHEPPARD FAIRY (OBEY GIANT POSTERS), NIKKI MCCLURE (Olympia, WA paper-cut artist) and JAY RYAN (Chicago, IL poster artist). Interviews in Art & Design 2 include Hernandez, Fairy, McClure, and Ryan along with filmmaker SADIE SHAW, designer ELLIOT EARLES, graffiti artists JOCYLIN SUPERSTAR and LITTLE MISS ATTITUDE, San Francisco's not-for-profit POND GALLERY, and CRASS collageist GEE VAUCHER. Articles in A&D2 include a profile of CHICAGO'S RADICAL STREET ARTISTS THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE AND LAND RECLAMATION, an overview of DIY COMICS, a story about the MURALS OF CHICAGO'S PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD, and a look at the PROJET MOBILIVRE/BOOKMOBILE PROJECT that is bringing zines and artist books into underserved neighborhoods. Plus reviews, columns, DIY and more. 168 pgs.

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## INTERVIEWED THIS ISSUE:

### Tom Robinson

For more information on Tom, stop by his website at [www.tomrobinson.com](http://www.tomrobinson.com)

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### Thursday

Thursday's web page is [www.fullcollapse.com](http://www.fullcollapse.com)

Their album, *Full Collapse*, is available from Victory Records  
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### the Haggard

A nice home page for the Haggard is at: [www.heartcorerecords.net/bands/haggard](http://www.heartcorerecords.net/bands/haggard)

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xbxr c/o nfjm; 3313 Dundee Ct.; Mobile, AL 36695

Their web page is [www.xbxr.com](http://www.xbxr.com)

Their album *Gop Ist Minee* is available from 5 Rue Christine  
PO Box 1190,  
Olympia, WA 98507-1190  
[www.5rc.com](http://www.5rc.com)

### BURN the Olympics

More information about BURN's critique of the Olympics and their actions at the winter games can be found at [www.burntheolympics.org](http://www.burntheolympics.org)

### Amy Ray

Amy's label, Daemon Records can be contacted by writing:  
PO Box 1207  
Decatur, GA 30031  
[www.daemonrecords.com](http://www.daemonrecords.com)

### Unwound

Unwound's many full-length records are available from:  
Kill Rock Stars  
120 NE State #418  
Olympia, WA 98501  
[www.killrockstars.com](http://www.killrockstars.com)

## WAR SONGS:

There are many fine alternative news sources covering the ongoing "war against terror." These are just a few:

### Commondreams News Center

[www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)

### CounterPunch newsletter

available for \$40/year from:  
CounterPunch 3220 N Street NW PMB 346  
Washington DC 2007-2829  
news also available online at:  
[www.counterpunch.com](http://www.counterpunch.com)

### Independent Media Center

[www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)

### AlterNet

[www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)

### Beyond the Blasts

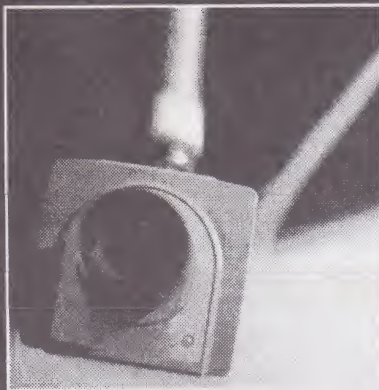
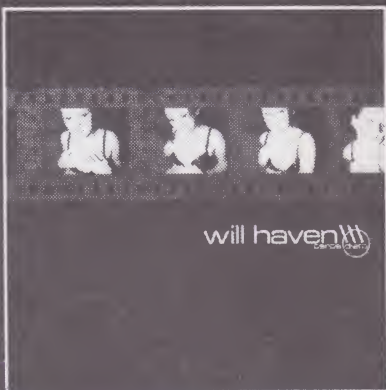
[www.motherjones.com/web\\_exclusives/features/news/blast1.html](http://www.motherjones.com/web_exclusives/features/news/blast1.html)

### RAWA online

the online home of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan  
[www.rawa.org](http://www.rawa.org)

# See also





"The noise-metal of Will Haven is a cleansing, cathartic experience that chafes like a giant wedge of pumice, rubbing the skin clean off your bones."

-CMJ

"THIS IS the sound of a band finding their feet in spectacular style. With the urgency and power of Drive Like Jehu, the DC-style suss of Blue Tip and a vocal style that is all their own, Garrison have carved out a beauty of a record."

-Kerrang

"Himsa is a metalcore messiah from Seattle. Every fevered track is like a swift steel foed boot to the Adam's Apple."

-Rockpile

**will haven** 

Carpe Diem

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10.23.01

**GARRISON**

Be A Criminal

REV:103 ★ LP/CD

11.13.01

**HIMSA**

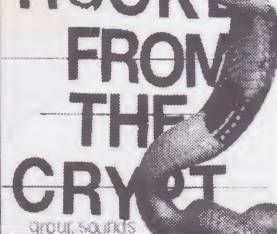
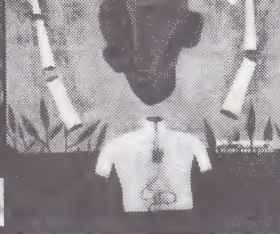
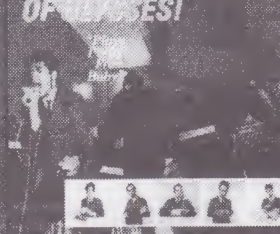
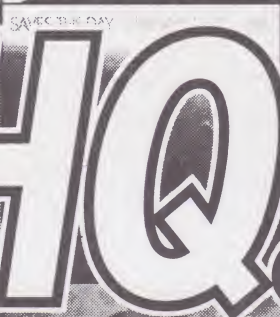
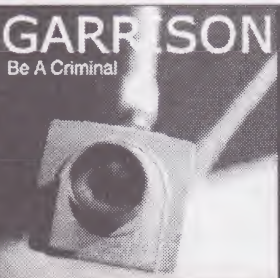
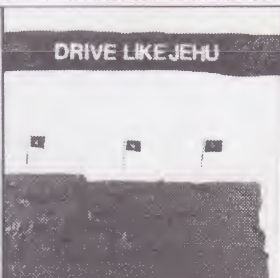
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REV:106 ★ 7"/CDep

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